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JESUS: THE LAST  
GREAT INITIATE

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**J E S U S**

**THE LAST GREAT INITIATE**



# JESUS

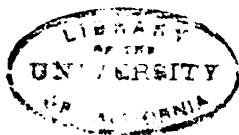
## THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

BY

EDOUARD SCHURÉ  
^

TRANSLATED BY

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## THE MISSION OF THE CHRIST

*"I came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them."*—MATTHEW v. 17.

*"The Light was in the world, and the world was made by it, but the world knew it not."*—JOHN i. 10.

*"As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."*—MATTHEW xxiv. 27.



## P R E F A C E

CRITICISM on the life of Jesus during the past century has been greatly to the fore. A complete account of this criticism will be found in the luminous sketch made by M. Sabatier,<sup>1</sup> in which the entire history and present state of this investigation are given. Sufficient for the moment to refer to the two principal phases supplied by Strauss and Renan, with the object of determining the new point of view I now wish to offer.

Departing from the philosophical school of Hegel to ally himself with the critical and historical one of Bauer, Strauss, without denying the existence of Jesus, endeavoured to prove that his life, as related in the Gospels, is a myth, a legend created by popular imagination, to meet the necessities of a rising Christianity, and in accordance with Old Testament prophecy. His position, a purely negative one, but which he defended with great skill and erudition, has been found true in certain details, but quite untenable in its entirety

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire des Sciences Religieuses*, par Lichtenberger, tome 7, article "Jesus."

and essential elements. It has, in addition, the grave defect of explaining neither the character of Jesus nor the origin of Christianity. The life of Jesus, according to Strauss, is a planetary system without a sun. One merit, however, must be granted this work, that of having transferred the problem from the ground of dogmatic theology to that of textual and historical criticism.

M. Renan's *Vie de Jesus* owes its brilliant success to its lofty, æsthetic, and literary qualities, as well as to the boldness of the writer, the first who dared make the life of the Christ a problem of human psychology. Has he solved the problem? After the dazzling success of the book, the general opinion of all serious critics has been in the negative. The Jesus of M. Renan begins his career as a gentle dreamer, an enthusiastic but simple-minded moralist; he ends it as a violent thaumaturgist, devoid of all idea of reality. "In spite of all the precautions of the historian," says M. Sabatier, "it is the march of a healthy mind in the direction of madness. The Christ of M. Renan hovers between the calculations of ambition and the dreams of a seer." The fact is that he becomes the Messiah without wishing—almost without knowing—it. He permits himself to be given this name merely to please the apostles and to fulfil the popular wish. It is not with so feeble a faith that a true prophet creates a new religion and changes the soul of the

earth. The life of Jesus, according to M. Renan, is a planetary system illumined by a pallid sun devoid of vivifying magnetism or creative heat.

How did Jesus become the Messiah? That is the primordial question, the solution of which is essential to the right understanding of the Christ; it is also that before which M. Renan hesitated and turned aside. M. Théodore Keim saw that this question must be boldly faced (*Das Leben Jesu*, Zürich, 1875, 3rd edition). His life of Jesus is the most remarkable that has appeared since M. Renan's. It throws on the question all the light given by texts and history esoterically interpreted. But the problem is not one capable of being solved without the aid of intuition and esoteric tradition.

It is by means of this esoteric light, the inner flame of all religions, the central truth of all fruitful philosophy, that I have attempted to reconstruct along its main lines, the life of Jesus, taking into account whatever previous historical criticism has hitherto cleared and prepared the ground. No need to define what I mean by the esoteric point of view, the synthesis of Religion and Science. Concerning the historical and relative value of the Gospels, I have taken the three synoptical Gospels (those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as a basis, and that of John as the arcanum of the esoteric teaching of the Christ, at the same time acknow-

ledging the subsequent language and form, and the symbolical tendency of this Gospel.

All four Gospels, which should be mutually examined and verified, are equally authentic, though from different claims. Those of Matthew and Mark are precious gospels of letter and fact; therein are to be found the public deeds and words of the Christ. The gentle Luke affords a glimpse of the mystery-meaning beneath the poetical legend-veil; it is the Gospel of the Soul, of Woman, and of Love. Saint John unfolds these mysteries; in his Gospel are to be found the inner depths of the doctrine, the secret teaching, the meaning of the promise, the esoteric reserve. Clement of Alexandria, one of the few Christian bishops who held the key to universal esoterism, rightly named it the Gospel of the Spirit. John has a profound insight of the transcendent truths revealed by the Master, and a great facility in presenting them. Accordingly, his symbol is the Eagle, whose wing cleaves the firmament, and whose flaming eye encompasses the depths of space.

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# JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

## CHAPTER I

### CONDITION OF THE WORLD AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS

A SOLEMN period of the world's destiny was approaching; the sky was overshadowed with darkness and filled with sinister omens.

In spite of the efforts of the initiates, polytheism, throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe, had terminated only in the downfall of civilisation. The sublime cosmogony of Orpheus, so gloriously chanted by Homer, had not been attained, and the only explanation possible is that human nature found great difficulty in maintaining a certain intellectual altitude. For the great spirits of antiquity, the gods were never anything more than a poetical expression of the subordinated forces

## 2 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

of Nature, a speaking image of its inner organism ; it is as symbols of cosmic and animic forces that these gods live indestructible in the consciousness of humanity. This diversity of gods and forces, the initiates thought, was dominated and penetrated by the supreme God or pure Spirit. The principal aim of the sanctuaries of Memphis, Delphi, and Eleusis had been precisely the teaching of this unity of God with the theosophical ideas and moral discipline resulting therefrom.

But the disciples of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato failed before the egoism of the politicians, the sordidness of the sophists, and the passions of the mob. The social and political decomposition of Greece was the consequence of its religious, moral, and intellectual decomposition. Apollo, the Solar Word, the manifestation of the supreme God and the supra-terrestrial world, is silent. No more oracles, no more inspired poets are to be heard ! Minerva, Wisdom, and Foresight, veils her countenance in presence of her people converted into Satyrs, profaning the mysteries, and insulting the gods in Aristophanic farces on the stage of Bacchus. The very mysteries themselves are corrupted, for sycophants and courtesans are admitted to the Eleusinian rites. . . . When soul becomes blunted, religion falls into idolatry ; when thought becomes

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 3

materialised, philosophy degenerates into scepticism. Thus we see Lucian, poor microbe born from the corpse of paganism, turn the myths into ridicule, when once Carneades had denied their scientific origin.

Superstitious in religion, agnostic in philosophy, egoistical and divided in politics, reeling under anarchy and fatally abandoned to despotism, Greece had become sadly changed from the time when she transmitted the science of Egypt and the mysteries of Asia in immortal forms of beauty.

If there was one who understood what the world needed, and who endeavoured to restore this need by an effort of heroic genius, that one was Alexander the Great. This legendary conqueror, initiated, as was also his father, Philip, into the mysteries of Samothrace, proved himself even more of an intellectual son of Orpheus than a disciple of Aristotle. Doubtless, the Achilles of Macedonia, who, accompanied by a mere handful of Greeks, crossed Asia as far as India, dreamed of universal empire, but not after the fashion of the Cæsars, by oppression of the people, and the destruction of religion and unfettered science. His grand idea was to reconcile Asia and Europe by a synthesis of religions, supported by scientific authority. Impelled by this thought, he paid homage to the

#### 4 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

science of Aristotle, as he did to the Minerva of Athens, the Jehovah of Jerusalem, the Egyptian Osiris, and the Hindu Brahma, recognising, as would a veritable initiate, an identical divinity and wisdom beneath these differing symbols. This new Dionysus possessed a broad sympathy and mighty prophetic insight. Alexander's sword typified the last flash of the Greece of Orpheus, illumining both East and West. The son of Philip died in the intoxication of victory and the glorious accomplishment of his dream, leaving the shreds of his empire to selfish and rapacious generals. But his thought did not die with him; he had founded Alexandria, where Oriental Philosophy, Judaism, and Hellenism were to be fused in the crucible of Egyptian esoterism, until the time might be ripe for the resurrection word of the Christ.

In proportion as Apollo and Minerva, the twin constellations of Greece, faded away on the horizon, the people saw a menacing sign, the Roman She-Wolf, rise in the troubled sky.

What is the origin of Rome? The conspiracy of a greedy oligarchy, in the name of brute force; the oppression of the human intellect, of religion, science, and art, by deified political power: in other words, the contrary of truth, by which a government receives its justification, according to

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 5

the supreme principles of science, justice, and economy.<sup>1</sup> x

The whole of Roman history is merely the consequence of the iniquitous pact by which the Conscript Fathers declared war, first, against Italy, and afterwards against the whole Roman race. They chose a fitting symbol; for the brazen She-Wolf, with tawny hair erect, and hyena's head turned in the direction of the Capitol, is the image of this government, the demon which will take possession of the Roman soul to the very end.

In Greece, at least, the sanctuaries of Delphi and Eleusis were long respected; at Rome, from the very outset, science and art were rejected. The attempt of the sage Numa, the Etruscan initiate, failed before the suspicious ambition of the Conscript Fathers. He brought with him the Sibylline books, which contained part of the science of Hermes, appointed magistrates elected by the people, distributed territory, and submitted the right of declaring war to the Fecial priests. Accordingly, King Numa, long cherished in the memory of the people, who regarded him as in-

<sup>1</sup> This point of view, in diametrical opposition to the empiric school of Aristotle and Montesquieu, was that of the great initiates, the Egyptian priests, as of Moses and Pythagoras. It had been previously amplified in the *Mission des Juifs* of M. Saint-Yves. See his remarkable chapter on the foundation of Rome.

## 6 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

spired by divine genius, seems to be a historical intervention of sacred science in the government. He does not represent the genius of Rome, but rather that of the Etruscan initiation, which followed the same principles as the school of Memphis and Delphi.

After Numa, the Roman Senate burnt the Sibylline Books, ruined the authority of the flamens, destroyed arbitral institutions, and returned to its old systems in which religion was nothing more than an instrument of public domination. Rome became the hydra which engulfed the peoples and their gods with them. The nations of the earth were gradually reduced to subjection and pillage. The Mamertine prison became filled with kings from North and South. Rome, bent on having no other kings than slaves and charlatans, destroys the final possessors of esoteric tradition in Gaul, Egypt, Judea, and Persia. She pretends to worship the gods, but the only object of her adoration is the She-Wolf. And now, away on the blood-stained dawn, there appears the final offspring of this ravenous creature, the embodiment of the genius of Rome—Cæsar! Rome has conquered all the nations of the earth, Cæsar, her incarnation, arrogates to himself universal power. He aspires not merely to become the ruler of mankind, for, uniting

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 7

the tiara with the diadem, he causes himself to be proclaimed Chief Pontiff. After the Battle of Thapsus, deification as a hero is voted him, after that of Munda, divine apotheosis is granted by the Senate; his statue is erected in the temple of Quirinus, and a college of officiating priests appointed, bearing his name. To crown all in irony and logic, this very Cæsar who deifies himself, denies in the presence of the Senate the immortality of the soul! Would it be possible to proclaim more openly that there is no longer any other God than Cæsar?

Under the Cæsars, Rome, inheritor of Babylon, extends her power over the whole world. What has become of the Roman State? It is engaged in destroying all collective life outside the capital. Military dictatorship in Italy, extortions of governors and tax-collectors in the provinces. Conquering Rome feeds like a vampire on the corpse of a worn-out system.

And now the Roman orgies are freely and publicly paraded with all their bacchanalia of vice and crime. They begin with the voluptuous meeting of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and will be brought to an end with the debaucheries of Messalina and the mad frenzy of Nero. They signalise their presence by a lascivious and public parody of



## 8 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

the mysteries, and are destined to close in the Roman Circus, where nude virgins, martyrs to their faith, are torn to pieces and devoured by savage beasts, amid the plaudits of thousands of spectators.

And yet, among the nations conquered by Rome, there was one which called itself the people of God, whose genius was the very opposite to that of Rome. How comes it that Israel, worn out by intestine strife, crushed by three centuries of slavery, had preserved its indomitable faith? Why did this conquered people rise, prophet-like, to oppose Greek decadence and Roman orgies? Whence did they derive the courage to predict the fall of the masters who had their feet on the throat of the nation, and speak of some vague final triumph, when they themselves were drawing to an irremediable ruin? The reason was, that a great idea, inspired by Moses, lived in the nation. Under Joshua, the twelve tribes had erected a commemorative pillar with the inscription, "This is a testimony between us that Jehovah is God alone."

The law-maker of Israel had made monotheism the corner-stone of his science and social law, as well as of a universal religious idea. He had had the genius to understand that on the triumph of

this idea the future of mankind would depend. To preserve it, he had written a hieroglyphic book, constructed a golden ark, and raised up a people from the nomad dust of the wilderness. On these witnesses of the spiritualistic idea Moses brought down the lightning flash and the thunderbolt from heaven. Against them conspired not only the Moabites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and all the tribes of Palestine, but even the frailties and passions of the Jewish people itself. The Book ceased to be understood by the priesthood; the ark was captured by enemies, numerous were the times when the people almost forgot their mission. Why then, in spite of all, did they remain faithful to this mission? Why had the idea of Moses remained graven on the brow and heart of Israel in letters of fire? To whom is due this exclusive perseverance, this magnificent fidelity amid the vicissitudes of a troubled history, such a fidelity as gave Israel a unique character among the nations? It may boldly be attributed to the prophets and the institution of prophecy; by oral tradition it may be traced back to Moses. The Hebrew people has had *Nabi* at all periods of its history, right to its dispersion. But the institution of prophecy appears first under an organic form at the time of Samuel. He it was who

## 10 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

founded the confraternities of *Nebiim*, those schools of prophets, in the face of a rising royalty and an already degenerate priesthood. He made them austere guardians of the esoteric tradition and the universal religious thought of Moses against the kings, in whom the political idea and national aim was to predominate. In these confraternities were preserved the relics of the science of Moses, the sacred music, the occult art of healing, and finally, the art of divination, exercised by the great prophets with masterly force and abnegation.

Divination has existed under the most diverse forms among all the peoples of the ancient cycle; but prophecy in Israel possesses an amplitude, a loftiness and authority, belonging to the intellectual and spiritual nature in which monotheism keeps the human soul. The prophecy offered by the theologians, literally, as the direct communication of a personal God, denied by naturalistic philosophy as pure superstition, is in reality nothing but the superior manifestation of the universal laws of the Spirit. "The general truths which govern the world," says Ewald, in his fine work on the prophets, "in other terms, *the thoughts of God*, are immutable and incapable of attack, quite independent of the fluctuations of things, or of the will and action of men. Man is originally intended to

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 11

participate in them, and translate them freely into acts. But for the Word of the Spirit to enter into carnal man, he must be fundamentally influenced by the great commotion of history. Then the Eternal Truth springs forth like a flash of light. This is why we so often read in the Old Testament that Jehovah is a living God. When man listens to the divine call, a new life is created in him; now he no longer feels himself alone, but in communion with God and all truth, ready to proceed eternally from one verity to another. In this new life, his thought becomes one with the universal will. He possesses a clear grasp of the present, and entire faith in the final success of the divine idea. The man who experiences this is a prophet, *i.e.* he feels himself irresistibly impelled to manifest himself before others as a representative of God. *His thought becomes vision*, and this superior might which forces the truth from his soul, at times with heart-breaking anguish, constitutes the prophetic element. *The prophetic manifestations, throughout history, have been the thunderbolts and lightning flashes of truth.*"<sup>1</sup>

From this spring, those giants, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, drew their might. Deep in their caves or in the palaces of the kings, they

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, *Die Propheten*: Introduction.

## 12 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

were indeed sentinels of Jehovah, and, as Elisha said to his master Elijah, "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Often do they foretell with prophetic vision the death of kings, the fall of kingdoms, and the punishments to be visited on Israel. At times they are mistaken. The prophetic torch, though lit by the sun of divine truth, will vacillate and darken in their hands under the influence of national passion. But never do they waver concerning moral truths, the real mission of Israel, the final triumph of justice to mankind. As true initiates, they preach their scorn of outer worship, the abolition of sacrifices of blood, the purification of the soul, and the practice of love. It is with regard to the final triumph of monotheism, its liberating and peace-bringing rôle to all nations, that their vision is truly remarkable. The most frightful misfortunes that can strike a nation, foreign invasion, captivity in Babylon, cannot shake their faith. Listen to what Isaiah said during the invasion of Sennacherib:—

"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her : rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.

"That ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

"For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream : then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

"And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb : and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

"For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

"For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh : and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

"They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination and the mouse shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.

"For I know their works and their thoughts : it shall come that I will gather all nations and tongues ; and they shall come and see my glory."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxvi. 10-18.

## 14 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

It is only before the tomb of the Christ that this vision begins to find realisation, but who could deny its prophetic truth when thinking of the part Israel played in the history of mankind ?

No less firm than this faith in the future of Jerusalem, in its moral grandeur and religious universality, is the faith of the prophets in a Saviour or a Messiah. They all speak of him ; the incomparable Isaiah is still the one whose vision is clearest, and who depicts it with greatest force in bold, lofty language :—

“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots ;

“And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ;

“And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears :

“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 15

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."<sup>1</sup>

Before this vision, the gloomy soul of the prophet becomes calm and clear, as does a tempest-troubled sky after a storm. For now it is indeed the image of the Galilean which is present before his inner vision :—

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief : and we hid as it were our faces from him ; he was despised and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xi. 1-5.



## 16 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”<sup>1</sup>

For eight centuries the thunder-words of the prophets caused the idea and image of the Messiah to hover above all national dissensions and misfortunes, at times under the form of a terrible avenger, and again as an angel of mercy. The Messianic idea, tenderly nurtured under Assyrian despotism in Babylonian exile, and brought to light under Persian domination, continued to grow under the reign of the Seleucides and the Maccabees. When the Roman rule and the reign of Herod came, the Messiah was alive in the consciousness of all. The great prophets had seen him as a great man, a martyr, a veritable son of God . . . the people, faithful to the Judaic idea, imagined him as a David, a Solomon, or a new Maccabeus. Whatever he might be, this restorer of Israel's greatness was believed in and expected by all. Such is the might of prophetic action.

Thus we see that just as Roman history ends in

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 2-8.

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 17

Cæsar, along the instinctive path and infernal logic of Destiny, so the history of Israel leads freely to the Christ along the conscious path and divine logic of Providence, manifested in its visible representatives, the prophets. Evil is fatally condemned to contradict and destroy itself, for it is the False ; but Good, in spite of all obstacles, engenders light and harmony after a lapse of time, for it is the fruit of Truth. From her triumph Rome obtained nothing but Cæsarism, from her downfall Israel gave birth to the Messiah.

A vague expectancy hung over the nations. In the excess of its evil all humanity had a presentiment of a saviour. For centuries mythology had dreamt of a divine child. The temples spoke of him in mystery ; astrologists calculated his coming ; frenzied sibyls had loudly proclaimed the downfall of pagan gods. The initiates had announced that some day the world would be governed by one of their own, a Son of God.<sup>1</sup> The world was expecting a spiritual king, such a one as would be understood by the poor and lowly.

The great Æschylus, son of a priest of Eleusis, was almost killed by the Athenians for daring to say in the crowded theatre, by the mouth of his

<sup>1</sup> Such is the esoteric signification of the beautiful legend of the magi coming from the far East to worship the child of Bethlehem.

## 18 JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

Prometheus, that the reign of Jupiter-Destiny would come to an end. Four centuries later, under the shadow of the throne of Augustus, the gentle Virgil announces a new age, and dreams of a marvellous child—

“Ultima Cumaei venit jam carminis aetas ;  
 Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.  
 Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna :  
 Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.  
 Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum  
 Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
 Casta, fave, Lucina ; tuus jam regnat Apollo.  
 . . . Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,  
 Terrasque, tractusque maris, coelumque profundum,  
 Aspice venturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo.”<sup>1</sup>

When will this child be born ? From what divine world will this soul come ? In what brilliant lightning-flash of love will it descend to earth ? By

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, Eclogue 4 :—

“The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,  
 Renews its finished course, Saturnian times  
 Roll round again, and mighty years begun  
 From their first orb in radiant circles run,  
 The base degenerate iron offspring ends,  
 A golden progeny from Heaven descends :  
 Oh ! Chaste Lucina ! Speed the mother’s pains,  
 And haste the glorious birth, thy own Apollo reigns.

See, labouring Nature calls thee to sustain  
 The nodding frame of Heaven and Earth and main :  
 See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air ;  
 And joyful ages from behind in crowding ranks appear ;  
 To sing thy praise. . . .”

—DRYDEN.

## THE WORLD AT BIRTH OF JESUS 19

what wonderful purity, what superhuman energy will it remember the abandoned heaven? By what mightier effort will it return from the depth of its earthly consciousness, taking with it mankind in its train?

No one could have told, but all were waiting and expecting. . . . Herod the Great, the Idumean usurper, the protégé of Augustus Cæsar, was then at the point of death in his Cyprian château at Jericho, after a sumptuous and blood-stained reign, which had covered Judea with splendid palaces and human hecatombs. He was dying from a terrible malady, decomposition of the blood, hated by all, torn with fury and remorse, haunted by the spectres of his innumerable victims, amongst whom were numbered his innocent wife, the noble Marian, of Maccabee blood, and three of his own sons. The seven women of his harem had fled the presence of the royal phantom. His very bodyguard had abandoned him. Impassive by the side of the dying wretch sat his sister Salome, his evil genius, the instigator of his foulest crimes. With diadem on brow, and breast sparkling with precious stones, she kept watch, waiting for the king's last breath, when she in her turn would seize the reins of sovereignty.

Thus died the last king of the Jews. At this very moment had just been born the future spiritual

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king of humanity,<sup>1</sup> and the few initiates of Israel were silently preparing for his reign in profound humility and silence.

<sup>1</sup> Herod died in the fourth year before our era. Calculations of the critics are now generally unanimous in giving this date also as the birth of Jesus. See Keim, *Das Leben Jesu*.

## CHAPTER II

### MARY—FIRST DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS

JEHOSHOUA, whom we call Jesus, from the Greek form of his name, was probably born in Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> It was certainly in this abandoned corner of Galilee that his childhood was passed, and the first, the greatest, of the Christian mysteries accomplished : the appearance of the soul of the Christ. He was the son of Miriam, or Mary, wife of the carpenter Joseph, a Galilean woman of noble origin, affiliated to the Essenes.

Legend has woven a tissue of marvels around the birth of Jesus. If legend gives refuge to numerous superstitions, it also at times conceals psychic truths but little known, for they are above the perception of the mass of mankind. One fact may be learned from the legendary history of Mary, that Jesus was a child consecrated before his birth to a prophetic mission, by the wish of his mother.

<sup>1</sup> It is by no means impossible that Jesus might chance to have been born in Bethlehem. But this tradition seems to form part of the cycle of posterior legends relating to the holy family and the infancy of the Christ.

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The same thing is related of several heroes and prophets of the Old Testament. These sons thus dedicated to God were called Nazarenes. Touching this point, it is interesting to refer to the histories of Samson and of Samuel. An angel announces to Samson's mother that she will soon be with child, and will give birth to a son, whose head the razor shall not touch. In the case of Samuel, it is the mother who herself requests a child from God (*Conf.* Judges xiii. 3-5; and 1 Samuel i. 11-20).

Now SAM-U-EL, in its original root signification, means, Inner glory of God. The mother, feeling herself, as it were, illumined by the one she incarnated, considered him as the ethereal essence of the Lord.

These passages are extremely important, as they introduce us to the esoteric, the constant and living tradition in Israel, and, along this channel, into the real signification of the Christian legend. Elkana, the husband, is indeed the earthly father of Samuel in the flesh, but the Eternal is his heavenly Father in the Spirit. The figurative language of Judaic monotheism here masks the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. The woman initiate appeals to a superior soul, demanding to receive it in her womb, and bring

to birth a prophet. This doctrine, considerably veiled by the Jews, and completely absent from their official worship, formed part of the secret tradition of the initiates. It appears in the prophets. Jeremiah affirms it in the following terms: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus will say the same to the scandalised Pharisees, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>2</sup>

How much of this can we apply in the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus? It appears that, in the first Christian communities, Jesus had been regarded as a son of Mary and Joseph, since Matthew gives us the genealogical tree of Joseph to prove that Jesus can trace his descent from David. At a later date, legend, anxious to show the supernatural origin of the Christ, wove her web of gold and azure; the history of Joseph and Mary, the Annunciation, and even the infancy of Mary in the temple.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 58.

<sup>3</sup> "Apocryphal Gospel of Mary and of the Saviour's Childhood, published by Tischendorf.



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An attempt to discover the esoteric signification of Jewish tradition and Christian legend would lead one to say that the action of Providence, or the influx of the spiritual world which co-operates in the birth of any man, whoever he be, is more powerful and evident at the birth of all men of genius, whose appearance can in no way be explained by the sole law of physical atavism. This influx reaches its greatest intensity in the case of one of those divine prophets destined to change the face of the world. The soul, chosen for a divine mission, comes from a divine world; it comes freely and consciously, but that it may enter upon an earthly life a chosen vessel is needed, and the appeal of a highly gifted mother, who by the attitude of her moral being, the desire of her soul, and the purity of her life, has a presentiment, attracts and incarnates into her very blood and flesh the soul of the Redeemer, destined in the eyes of men to become a son of God. Such is the profound truth beneath the ancient idea of the Virgin-Mother. The Hindoo genius had already given expression to this idea in the legend of Krishna. The Gospels of Matthew and of Luke have rendered it with an even more admirable simplicity and poetic instinct.

“To the soul which comes from heaven, birth

is a death," Empodocles had said 500 years B.C. However sublime the spirit be, once imprisoned in flesh, it temporarily loses the remembrance of all its past; once engaged in corporal life, the development of its earthly consciousness is subjected to the laws of the world in which it incarnates. It falls under the force of the elements. The higher its origin, the greater will be the effort to regain its dormant powers, its celestial innatenesses, and to become conscious of its mission.

Profound and tender souls need silence and peace to spring into manifestation. Jesus passed his early years amid the calm of Galilee. His first impressions were gentle, austere, and serene. His birthplace resembled a corner of heaven, dropped on the side of a mountain. The village of Nazareth has changed but little with the flight of time.<sup>1</sup> Its houses rising in tiers under the rock, resembled—so travellers say—white cubes scattered about in a forest of pomegranate, vine, and fig trees, whilst myriads of doves filled the heavens. Around this nest of verdant freshness floats the pure mountain air, whilst on the heights

<sup>1</sup> See the masterly description of M. Renan's Galilée in his *Vie de Jésus*, and the no less remarkable one of M. E. Melchior de Vogué in his *Voyage en Syrie et en Palestine*.

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may be seen the open, clear horizon of Galilee. Add to this imposing background the quiet, solemn home-life of a pious, patriarchal family. The strength of Jewish education lay always in the unity of law and faith, as well as in the powerful organisation of the family dominated by the national and religious idea. The paternal home was a kind of temple for the child. Instead of the grinning frescoes, the nymphs and fauns which adorned the atrium of the Greek houses, such as could be seen at Sephoris and Tiberias, there could be found in the Jewish houses only passages from the laws and the prophets, the stern, rigid texts standing out in Chaldean characters above the doors and upon the walls. But the union of father and mother in mutual love of their children illumined and warmed the house with a distinctly spiritual life. It was there Jesus received his early instruction, and first became acquainted with the Scriptures under the teaching of his parents. From his earliest childhood the long strange destiny of the people of God appeared before him in the periodic feasts and holy days celebrated in family life by reading, song, and prayer. At the Feast of Tabernacles, a shed, made of myrtle and olive branches, was erected in the court or on the roof of the house in memory of

the nomad patriarchs of bygone ages. The seven-branched candlestick was lit, and there were produced the rolls of papyrus from which the secret history was read aloud. To the child's mind, the Eternal was present, not merely in the starry sky, but even in this candlestick the reflex of his glory, in the speech of the father and the silent love of the mother. Thus Jesus was made acquainted with the great days in Israel's history, days of joy and sorrow, of triumph and exile, of numberless afflictions and eternal hope. The father gave no reply to the child's eager and direct questions. But the mother, raising those dreamy eyes from beneath their long dark lashes, and catching her son's questioning look, said to him, "The Word of God lives in his prophets alone. Some day the wise Essenes, solitary wanderers by Mount Carmel and the Dead Sea, will give thee an answer."

We may also imagine the child Jesus amongst his young companions, exercising over them the strange prestige given by a precocious intelligence joined to active sympathy and the feeling of justice. We follow him to the synagogue, where he heard the Scribes and Pharisees discuss together, and where he himself was to exercise his dialectical powers. We see him quickly repelled by the arid

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teachings of these doctors of the law, who tortured the letter to such an extent as to do away with the spirit. And again, we see him brought into contact with pagan life as he visited the wealthy Sephoris, capital of Galilee, residence of Antipas, guarded by Herod's mercenaries, Gauls, Thracians, and barbarians of every kind. In one of those frequent journeys to visit Jewish families, he might well have pushed on to a Phoenician town, one of those veritable hives of human beings, swarming with life, by the seaside. He would see from afar the low temples, with their thick sturdy columns, surrounded with dark groves, whence issued the songs of the priestesses of Astarte, to the doleful accompaniment of the flute; their voluptuous shrieks, piercing as a cry of pain, would awaken in his heart a deep groan of anguish and pity. Then Mary's son returned to his beloved mountains with a feeling of deliverance. He mounted the steeps of Nazareth, gazing around on the vast horizon towards Galilee and Samaria, and cast lingering eyes on Carmel, Gilboa, Tabor, and Sichem, old-standing witnesses of the patriarchs and prophets.

However powerful might have been the impressions of the outer world on the soul of Jesus, they all grew pale before the sovereign and inexpress-

sible truth in his inner world. This truth was expanding in the depths of his nature, like some lovely flower emerging from a dark pool. It resembled a growing light which appeared to him when alone in silent meditation. At such times men and things, whether near or far away, appeared as though transparent in their essence. He read thoughts and saw souls ; then, in memory, he caught glimpses, as though through a thin veil, of divinely beautiful and shining beings bending over him, or assembled in adoration of a dazzling light. Wonderful visions came in his sleep, or interposed themselves between himself and reality by a veritable duplication of his consciousness. In these transports of rapture which carried him from zone to zone as though towards other skies, he at times felt himself attracted by a mighty dazzling light, and then plunged into an incandescent sun. These ravishing experiences left behind in him a spring of ineffable tenderness, a source of wonderful strength. How perfect was the reconciliation he felt with all beings, in what sublime harmony was he with the universe ! But what was this mysterious light—though even more familiar and living than the other—which sprang forth from the depths of his nature, carrying him away to the most distant tracts of space, and yet

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uniting him by secret vibrations with all souls ?  
Was it not the source of souls and worlds ?

He named it : His Father in Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

This primitive feeling of unity with God in the light of Love, is the first, the great revelation of Jesus. An inner voice told him to hide it deep in his heart ; all the same, it was to give light to his whole life. It gave him an invincible feeling of certainty, made him at once gentle and indomitable ; converted his thought into a diamond shield, and his speech into a sword of flame.

Besides, this profoundly secret, mystical life was united with a perfect clearness on matters of everyday life. Luke shows him at the age of twelve years as "increasing in strength, grace, and wisdom." The religious consciousness was, in Jesus, innate, absolutely independent of the outer world. His prophetic and Messianic conscious-

<sup>1</sup> Mystical annals of all times show that moral or spiritual truths of a superior order have been perceived by certain highly endowed souls, without reasoning, simply by inner contemplation and under the form of a vision. This is a psychical phenomenon imperfectly known to modern science, but still an incontestable fact. Catherine de Sienne, daughter of a poor dyer, at the age of four years, saw visions of an extremely remarkable nature. Swedenborg, man of science, calm observer and reasoner, began at the age of forty years, and in perfect health, to have visions which had no relation with his previous life. I do not pretend to place these phenomena on exactly the same plane as those which took place in the consciousness of Jesus, but simply to establish the universality of an inner perception, independent of the bodily senses.

ness could only be awakened by outer circumstances, by the life of his age, in short, by special initiation and long inner elaboration. Traces of this are found in the Gospels and elsewhere.

The first great shock came to him during a journey to Jerusalem with his parents, as related by Luke. This town, the pride of Israel, had become the centre of Jewish aspirations. Its misfortunes had had no other effect than to exalt the minds of men. Under the Seleucides and Maccabees, first by Pompey and finally by Herod, Jerusalem had been subjected to the most terrible of sieges. Blood had been shed in torrents ; the Roman legions had butchered the people in its streets, and innumerable crucifixions had polluted the surrounding heights. After such horrors, and the humiliation following on the Roman occupation, after decimating the Sanhedrim and reducing the pontiff to a mere trembling slave, Herod, as though in irony, had rebuilt the temple with more magnificent pomp and glory than ever. Ieroushalaim remained, none the less, the holy city. Had not Isaiah, the favourite author of Jesus, named it "the bride, before whom the people shall bow down" ? He had said "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wast-



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ing nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise."<sup>1</sup> To see Jerusalem and the Temple of Jehovah was the dream of all Jews, especially since Judæa had become a Roman province. They journeyed hither from Perea, Galilee, Alexandria, and Babylon. On the way, whether in the wilderness under the waving palms, or near the wells, they cast longing eyes, as they sang their psalms, in the direction of the hill of Zion. A strange feeling of oppression must have come over the soul of Jesus, when, on his first pilgrimage, he saw the city girt around with lofty walls, standing there on the mountain, like a gloomy fortress, the Roman amphitheatre of Herod at its gates, the Antonia tower dominating the temple, and Roman legions—lance in hand—keeping watch from the heights. He ascended the temple steps, and admired the beauty of those marble porticoes, along which walked the Pharisees in sumptuous flowing garments. After crossing the Gentiles', he proceeded to the women's court, and, mingling with the crowd of Israelites, drew near the Nicanor gate, and the three-cubit balustrade, behind which were to be seen priests in sacerdotal robes of purple and violet, shining with gold and precious

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lx. 3, 18.

stones, officiating there in front of the sanctuary, sacrificing bulls and goats, and sprinkling the blood over the people as they pronounced a blessing. All this bore no resemblance to the temple of his dreams, or the heaven in his heart.

Then he descended again into the more populous quarters of the town, where he saw beggars pallid with hunger, and whose faces were torn with anguish ; a veritable reflection of the tortures and crucifixions accompanying the late wars. Leaving the city by one of the gates, he wandered among those stony valleys and gloomy ravines forming the quarries, pools, and tombs of the kings, and converting Jerusalem into a veritable sepulchre. There he saw maniacs issue from the caves, shrieking out blasphemies against living and dead alike. Then, descending a broad flight of stones to the pool of Siloam, he saw stretched out at the water's brink lepers, paralytics, and wretches, covered with ulcers and sores in the most abject misery. An irresistible impulse compelled him to look deep into their eyes, and drink in all their grief and pain. Some asked him for help, others were gloomy and hopeless, others again, with senses numbed, seemed to have done with suffering. But then how long had they been there to have come to such a state ?

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Then Jesus said to himself : "Of what use are these priests, this temple and these sacrifices, since they can afford no relief to such terrible suffering ?" And, of a sudden, like an overwhelming torrent, he felt pouring into his heart the grief and pains of this town and its inhabitants—of the whole of humanity. He understood now that a happiness he could not share with others was absolutely impossible. These looks of despair were never more to leave his memory. Human Suffering, a sad-faced bride, would henceforth accompany him everywhere, whispering in his ear : "I will never leave thee more !"

His soul full of anguish, he left Jerusalem, and proceeded towards the open peaks of Galilee. A cry leapt forth from the depths of his heart : "Father in Heaven ! Grant that I may know, and heal and save !"

## CHAPTER III

### THE ESSENES—JOHN THE BAPTIST—THE TEMPTATION

WHAT he wished to know he could learn from none other than the Essenes.

The Gospels have maintained perfect silence as to the deeds of Jesus, previous to his meeting with John the Baptist, through whom, according to them, he in some way took possession of his ministry. Immediately afterwards he makes his appearance in Galilee with a clearly defined doctrine, the assurance of a prophet, and the consciousness of the Messiah. But evidently this bold and pre-meditated début was preceded by the long development of a veritable initiation. No less certain is it that this initiation must have taken place in the sole association in Israel, which, at that time, preserved the real traditions of the prophets and adopted their mode of living. There can be no doubt of this among those who, rising above the superstition of literal interpretation, have the courage to discover how things are linked together

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by their spirit. This arises not merely from the intimate relations seen to exist between the doctrine of Jesus and that of the Essenes, but even from the very silence kept by the Christ and His disciples concerning this sect. Why does he who attacks with unparalleled courage all the religious sects of his day, never mention the Essenes? And why do neither the apostles nor evangelists speak of them? Evidently because they considered the Essenes as belonging to themselves, as being linked with them by the oath of the mysteries, and linked to the sect of the Christians.

The Order of the Essenes constituted in the time of Jesus the final remnant of those brotherhoods of prophets organised by Samuel. The despotism of the rulers of Palestine, the jealousy of an ambitious and servile priesthood, had forced them to take refuge in silence and solitude. They no longer struggled as did their predecessors, but contented themselves with preserving their traditions. They had two principal centres, one in Egypt, on the banks of Lake Maoris, the other in Palestine, at Engaddi, near the Dead Sea. The name of Essenes they had adopted came from the Syrian word "Asaya," physician—in Greek, therapeutes; for their only acknowledged ministry with regard to the public was that of healing disease both

physical and moral. "They studied with great diligence," says Josephus, "certain medical writings dealing with the occult virtues of plants and minerals."<sup>1</sup>

Some of them possessed the gift of prophecy, as, *e.g.*, Menahim, who had prophesied to Herod that he should reign. "They serve God," said Philo, "with great piety, not by offering victims but by sanctifying the spirit; avoiding towns, they devote themselves to the arts of peace; not a single slave is to be found among them; they are all free and work for one another."<sup>2</sup> The rules of the Order were strict; in order to enter, a year's novitiate was necessary. If one had given sufficient proofs of temperance, he was admitted to the ablutions, though without entering into relations with the masters of the Order. Tests, extending over another two years, were necessary before being received into the brotherhood. They swore "by terrible oaths" to observe the rules of the Order and to betray none of its secrets. Then only did they participate in the common repasts, which were celebrated with great solemnity and constituted the inner worship of the Essenes.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," xxx. 2, &c.; "Antiquities," xiii. 5-9; xviii. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Philo, "On the Contemplative Life."

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The garment they had worn during these repasts they looked upon as sacred and to be removed before resuming work. These fraternal love-feasts, primitive form of the Supper instituted by Jesus, began and ended by prayer. The first interpretation of the sacred books of Moses and the prophets was here given. But the explanation of the texts allowed of three significations, just as there were three degrees of initiation. Very few attained to the highest degree. All this wonderfully resembles the organisation of the Pythagoreans,<sup>1</sup> but certainly it was almost the same amongst the ancient prophets, for it is to be found wherever initiation has existed. It must be added that the Essenes professed the essential dogma of the Orphic and Pythagorean doctrine; that of the pre-existence of the soul, the consequence and reason of its immortality. "The soul," they said, "descending from the most subtle ether, and attracted into the body by a certain natural charm (*ἰσχυρὴ τινὶ φύσει*), remains

<sup>1</sup> Points in common between Essenes and Pythagoreans: Prayer at sunrise; linen garments, fraternal love-feasts; one year's novitiate; three degrees of initiation; organisation of the Order and community of possessions managed by trustees; the law of silence; the oath of the mysteries; the division of instruction into three parts: (1) Science of the universal principles of Theogony, what Philo calls Logic; (2) Physics or Cosmogony; (3) Morals, *i.e.* everything dealing with man, the conscience to which the healers specially devoted themselves.

there as in a prison ; freed from the bonds of the body, as from a long servitude, it joyfully takes its flight " (Josephus, *A. J.*, ii. 8).

Among the Essenes, the brothers, properly so called, lived under a community of property, and in a condition of celibacy, cultivating the ground, and, at times, educating the children of strangers. The married Essenes formed a class affiliated and under subjection to the other. Silent, gentle, and grave, they were to be met with here and there, cultivating the arts of peace. Carpenters, weavers, vine-planters, or gardeners, never gunsmiths or merchants. Scattered in small groups about the whole of Palestine, and in Egypt, even as far as Mount Horeb, they offered one another the most complete hospitality. Thus we see Jesus and his disciples journeying from town to town, and from province to province, and always certain of finding shelter and lodging. "The Essenes," said Josephus, "were of an exemplary morality, they forced themselves to suppress passion and anger ; always benevolent, peaceable, and trustworthy. Their word was more powerful than an oath, which, in ordinary life, they looked upon as superfluous, and almost as perjury. They endured the most cruel of tortures, with admirable steadfastness of soul and smiling countenance rather than violate the



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slightest religious precept." Indifferent to the outward pomp of worship at Jerusalem, repelled by the harshness of the Sadducees, and the prayers of the Pharisees, as well as by the pedantry of the synagogue, Jesus was attracted towards the Essenes by natural affinity.<sup>1</sup>

The premature death of Joseph set entirely free Mary's son, now grown into a man. His brothers could continue the father's trade and supply all family needs, so Mary gave him permission to leave secretly for Engaddi. Welcomed as a brother and one of the elect, he rapidly acquired over his very masters an invincible ascendancy, by reason of his superior faculties, his ardent love, and an indescribable divine element manifested throughout his entire being. From the Essenes he received what they alone could give him : the esoteric tradition of the prophets, and by its means, his own historical and religious tendency or trend. He came to understand how wide a gulf separated the official Jewish doctrine from the ancient wisdom of the initiates, the veritable mother of religions, though ever persecuted by Satan, *i.e.* by

<sup>1</sup> Points in common between the doctrines of the Essenes and those of Jesus : " Love of one's neighbour, emphasised as one's first duty ; prohibition of the oath as witnesses to truth ; hatred of lying ; meekness ; institution of the Supper, borrowed from the fraternal love-feasts of the Essenes, but with a new signification, that of sacrifice."

the spirit of evil, of egoism, hatred, and denial, allied with absolute political power and priestly imposture. He learned that Genesis, under the seal of its symbolism, concealed a theogony and cosmogony as far removed from their literal signification as is the profoundest truth of science from a child's fable. He contemplated the days of Aelohim, or the eternal creation by emanation of the elements and the formation of the worlds, the origin of the floating souls, and their return to God by progressive existences or generations of Adam. He was struck with the grandeur of the thought of Moses, whose intention had been to prepare the religious unity of the nations by establishing the worship of the one God, and incarnating this idea into a people.

Afterwards he was instructed in the doctrine of the divine Word, already taught by Krishna in India, by the priests of Osiris, by Orpheus and Pythagoras in Greece, and known to the prophets under the name of *the Mysteries of the Son of Man and of the Son of God*. According to this doctrine, the highest manifestation of God is man, who, in constitution, form, organs, and intelligence is the image of the Universal Being, whose faculties he possesses. In the earthly evolution of humanity, however, God is scattered,

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split up, and mutilated, so to speak, in the multiplicity of men and of human imperfections. In it he suffers, struggles, and tries to find himself, he is the Son of Man, the perfect Man, the Man-Type, the profoundest thought of God, remaining hidden in the infinite abyss of his desire and power. And yet at certain epochs, when humanity is to be saved from some terrible gulf, and set on a higher stand, a chosen one identifies himself with divinity, attracts it to himself by strength, wisdom, and love, and manifests it anew to men. Then, divinity, by the virtue and breath of the Spirit, is completely present in him : the Son of Man becomes the Son of God, and his living word. In other ages and among other nations, there had already appeared sons of God, but since Moses, none had arisen in Israel. All the prophets were expecting this Messiah. The Seers even said that this time he would call himself the Son of Woman, of the Heavenly Isis, of the divine light which is the Bride of God, for the light of Love would shine in him, above every other light, with a dazzling splendour, hitherto unknown on earth.

All these secrets which the patriarch of the Essenes unfolded to the young Galilean on the solitary banks of the Dead Sea, in lonely Engaddi,

seemed to him wonderful, but yet known. It was with no ordinary emotion that he heard the chief of the Order comment on the words still to be read in the Book of Henoch : " From the beginning the Son of Man was in the mystery. The Father kept him near his mighty presence, and *manifested him to his elect*. . . . But the Kings shall be afraid and shall prostrate themselves to the ground with terror, when they shall see the *Son of Woman* seated on the throne of his glory. . . . Then the elect shall summon all the forces of heaven, all the saints from on high and the power of God ; and the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Ophanim, all the angels of *Might*, all the angels of the *Lord*, *i.e.* of the Elect and of *the other Might*, serving on earth and above the waters, shall raise their voices." <sup>1</sup>

At these revelations the words of the prophets, read and meditated upon times innumerable, appeared before the eyes of the Nazarene, with a profound and terrible light, like lightning flashes in the night. Who could this Elect be, and when would he appear before Israel ?

<sup>1</sup> Book of Henoch, chaps. xlviii. and lxi. This passage shows that the doctrine of the Word, the Trinity found in the Gospel of John existed in Israel long before the time of Jesus, and came from the very depths of esoteric prophecy. In the Book of Henoch, the Lord of Spirits represents the Father, the Elect represents the Son, and the other Might, the Holy Ghost.

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Jesus passed a series of years among the Essenes. He submitted to their discipline, studied with them the secrets of nature, and the occult power of healing. To develop his spirit, he gained entire mastery over his body. Not a day passed without self-questioning and meditation on the destiny of humanity. That was a memorable night for the Order of the Essenes and the new adept, when he received in profoundest secrecy the superior initiation of the fourth degree, the one granted only in the special case of a prophetic mission, requested by the brother, and confirmed by the Elders. A meeting was held in a cave cut into the mountain, and resembling a vast hall with an altar of stone seats. The chief of the Order was there with a few Elders. Sometimes two or three initiates, prophetesses also, Essenes, were admitted to the mysterious ceremony. Bearing torches and branches of palm trees, they greeted the new Initiate who was clothed in a robe of white linen, as "Bridegroom and King," the one they had seen in vision, and whom they now looked upon perhaps for the last time! Then, the chief of the Order, generally an old centenarian (Josephus states that the Essenes lived to an advanced age) offered him *the golden chalice* as a symbol of the final initiation, containing *the wine of the Lord's vineyard*, symbol of divine

inspiration. Some said that Moses and the seventy had drunk therefrom; others trace it back from Abraham, who received from Melchisedek this very initiation under the elements of bread and wine.<sup>1</sup> The Elders never offered the cup to any one in whom they had not recognised, with distinct certainty, the signs of a prophetic mission. But no one could define this mission, he was to find it himself; such is the law of the initiates—nothing from without, everything from within. Henceforth he was free, master of his own actions, liberated from the Order, a very hierophant, obedient to the impulses of the spirit which could fling him into the depths or transport him on high, far above scenes of torture and human passion.

When after the songs and prayers and sacramental words of the Elder the Nazarene took the cup, a pale ray of the sun shooting through a rugged mountain crag ran in and about the torches and the flowing white garments of the Essene prophetesses. They too shuddered as they saw it fall on the Galilean's beautiful countenance, now overshadowed with a look of infinite sorrow. Were his thoughts dwelling on the poor wretches of Siloam; had he already, in that ever-present anguish, caught a glimpse of the path he was to traverse?

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xiv. 18.

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About this time, John the Baptist was preaching on the banks of the Jordan. He was not an Essene, but a prophet of the people, belonging to the sturdy race of Judah. Driven into the wilderness by a fierce unyielding piety, he had there, in prayer, fasting, and mortification, lived a life of the strictest asceticism. Over his bare sun-tanned skin he wore a camel's-hair cloak, symbol of the penitence he wished to impose both on himself and on his people. Deeply did he feel Israel's distress, and ardently did he await deliverance. According to the Jewish idea, he imagined the Messiah would soon come as an Avenger and a Judge; that, like another Maccabæus, he would rouse the people to revolt, drive out the Romans, punish the guilty, and finally enter Jerusalem in triumph, where, in peace and justice, he would re-establish the kingdom of Israel over all nations. He announced to the multitudes, who eagerly drank in his words, that the time was nigh for the coming of this Messiah, adding that they might prepare for it in a spirit of true repentance. Adopting the Essenian custom of ablution and transforming it, he had looked upon baptism in the Jordan as a visible symbol, a public accomplishment of the inner purification he insisted upon. This new ceremony, this earnest preaching to immense crowds of people, with the wilderness as

a background, and beside the sacred waters of the Jordan, near the rugged mountains of Peraea and Judaea, seized hold of the imagination, and attracted multitudes. It recalled the glorious days of the prophets of old, and gave the people what the temple could not give them, an inner shock, and, after the terrors of repentance had passed, a vague though mighty hope. They came from every part of Palestine, and even from more distant lands, to hear the desert-saint who foretold the coming of the Messiah. The populace, attracted by his message, remained there in camps, for weeks at a time, listening to him daily, unwilling to depart, awaiting the Messiah's coming. Many asked to take up arms under his command, and to recommence the holy war. Herod Antipas and the priests of Jerusalem began to be uneasy at this excitement of the populace. The signs of the times, too, were ominous; Tiberius, at the age of seventy-four, was rapidly hastening his death by scenes of debauchery at Capreae; Pontius Pilate was persecuting the Jews with redoubled fury; whilst, in Egypt, the priests had given forth that the Phoenix was about to spring again to birth from her ashes.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus, who felt the prophetic calling even more emphatic within his soul, though as yet he was

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, vi. 28, 31.



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still feeling his way, came also to the desert of the Jordan, accompanied by a few Essenes, who already acknowledged him as master. He wished to see the Baptist, to listen to his message, and be baptized in public. His desire was to present himself in an humble and respectful attitude towards the prophet who had the courage to denounce the present rulers, and arouse from slumber the soul of Israel.

He saw the rough ascete, hairy and bearded, with his prophetic lionlike head, standing in a wooden pulpit under a rustic tent covered with branches and goat-skins. All around among the scanty desert shrubs was a mighty crowd, an entire camp : publicans, soldiers of Herod, Samaritans, Levites from Jerusalem ; Idumeans with their flocks of sheep, even Arabs with their camels, tents and caravans arrested by "the voice crying in the wilderness," and this voice of thunder passed over these multitudes. It said : "Repent ye ; prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." He called the Pharisees and Scribes "a race of vipers." He added that "the axe was already laid unto the root of the trees," and said of the Messiah : "I baptize you with water only, but He shall baptize you with fire." Then, about sunset, he saw the crowds press towards a cove on the water's

bank, and Herod's mercenaries bend their rough backs beneath the water poured over them by the Baptist. He drew nearer; John did not know Jesus, knew nothing whatever concerning him, but he recognised the Essene by his linen garment. He saw him, a mere unit in the crowd, enter the water up to the girdle, and humbly bend to receive the baptismal sprinkling. When the neophyte arose, the savage preacher's fiery eyes met the Galilean's calm, gentle gaze. A quiver ran through the man of the wilderness as he saw the look of wondrous sweetness beaming from the eyes of Jesus, and involuntarily the question escaped his lips: "Art thou the Messiah?"<sup>1</sup>

The mysterious Essene made no reply, but with bowed head and crossed hands, he awaited the blessing. John knew that silence was the law of the Essene novices. After solemnly extending both hands, the Nazarean disappeared with his companions among the water reeds.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Gospels, John immediately recognised Jesus as the Messiah, and baptized him as such. There are contradictory accounts on this point, for, at a later time, when a prisoner of Antipas at Makerous asks the question of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" this tardy doubt proves that though he might have suspected Jesus to be the Messiah, he was not convinced of it. The first compilers of the Gospels, however, being Jews, wished to present Jesus as having received his mission and consecration from John the Baptist, a popular prophet of Judæa.

The Baptist saw him depart with mingled feelings of doubt, secret joy, and profound sadness. What was his own knowledge, his own prophetic hope compared with the light he had seen in the eyes of the unknown, a light which seemed to illuminate his whole being? Ah! if the handsome young Galilean were the Messiah, then indeed had the brightest day of his life dawned! But his own part would now be over, his own voice silent. From this day forward he preached in deeper and more emotional tones on the melancholy theme: "He must increase and I must decrease." He was beginning to feel the gloom and weariness of an old lion tired of roaring, and now silently awaiting the end.

Could it be that he were the Messiah? The Baptist's question also found an echo in the soul of Jesus. Ever since his consciousness had sprung to life, he had found God within himself, and the certainty of the kingdom of Heaven in the radiant beauty of his visions. Then came the suffering of humanity which had filled his heart with the awful outpour of its anguish. The wise Essenes had taught him the secret of religions and of mysteries, they had shown him the spiritual decadence of humanity, and its expectation of a saviour. But how could he find the strength

needed to rescue it from the pit? And now, the direct call of John the Baptist fell on the silence of his meditations like a thunderbolt from Sinai. Could he be the Messiah?

Jesus could answer this question only by inmost meditation. Hence this retreat, this forty days' fast, narrated by Matthew in the form of a symbolic legend. The Temptation in reality represents in the life of Jesus this great crisis, this sovereign vision of truth, which all prophets, all religious initiates, must infallibly experience before beginning their work.

Over above Engaddi, where the Essenes cultivated sesame and the vine, a steep footpath led to a cave or grotto opening out on to the mountain-side. It was entered by way of Dorian columns cut out in the rough rock, similar to those of the "Apostles" retreat in the valley of Jehosophat. There one remained suspended above the yawning precipice as though from an eagle's nest. Below, in a gorge, could be seen vineyards and human dwellings away in the distance, the Dead Sea motionless and grey, and the lonely mountains of Moab. The Essenes had appointed this retreat for such among them as wished to submit to the test of solitude. In this spot were several rolls of the prophets, strengthening spices, dry figs, and a small

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stream of trickling water, sole nourishment of the ascete in meditation. It was to this cave that Jesus retired. First of all, he mentally reviewed the whole of humanity's past life, and estimated the gravity of the present times. Rome was in sovereign power, and with her what the Persian magi had called the reign of Ahrimanes, and the prophets the reign of Satan, the sign of the Beast, the apotheosis of Evil. Darkness covered humanity, the soul of earth.

The people of Israel had received from Moses the royal and sacerdotal mission of representing the male religion of the Father of the pure Spirit, of teaching it to other nations, and effecting its triumph. Had its kings and prophets fulfilled this mission? The prophets who alone had been conscious of it, replied unanimously: No! Israel was in her last throes, crushed beneath the might of Rome. Ought a rising of the people to be hazarded once more as the Pharisees still expected; a restoration by force of the temporal royalty of Israel? Should he declare himself son of David, and exclaim with Isaiah: "In my wrath I will trample upon the people . . . and overthrow their might"? Should he be a second Maccabæus, and allow himself to be nominated pontifex-king? Jesus might have made the attempt. He had seen the crowds ready

to rise at the voice of John the Baptist, and the strength he was himself conscious of was far greater than that of the prophet of the wilderness ! But then, would violence overcome violence ? Would the sword put an end to government by the sword ? Would there not be thus supplied fresh recruits to the powers of darkness who were watching their prey in secret ?

Ought he not rather to place within the reach of all mankind this truth, which hitherto had remained the privilege of a few sanctuaries and initiates, to open every heart to receive it, until the time should be ripe for it to penetrate the mind by inner revelation and science, *i.e.* to preach the kingdom of Heaven to the poor and lowly, substitute the reign of Grace for that of the Law, transform humanity from its very base by regeneration of souls ?

But to whom would victory belong, to Satan or to God ? To the spirit of evil who reigns with the formidable powers of earth, or to the divine spirit who is enthroned above the invisible regions of heaven, and sleeps in the heart of man just as the spark lies hidden in the flint ? What would be the fate of the prophet who should dare to tear away the veil from the temple and lay bare the emptiness of the sanctuary, braving at once Herod and Cæsar ?

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And yet it must be done ! The inner voice did not say to him as it did to Isaiah : "Take a large volume and write therein with a man's pen !" The voice of God cried out to him, "Rise and speak !" The word of life must be found, the faith which removes mountains, the strength which shatters the bulwarks of evil.

Jesus began fervently to pray. Then a feeling of uneasiness, an increasing trouble came over his soul. He had a feeling that he was losing the marvellous felicity he had participated in, and that he was sinking into a very pit of darkness. A black, dense mist came over him, peopled with phantoms of every kind. He recognised his brothers, his Essene masters, his mother. One after the other they said to him : "It is madness for you to wish for what can never be ! You know not what is before you ! Renounce it all !" The invincible inner voice replied : "I must go on !" Thus he struggled for a series of days and nights, at times standing, then again on his knees or prostrate on the ground. The abyss in which he was sinking became deeper and deeper, and thicker and thicker the enveloping mist. He felt as though he were approaching something inexpressibly terrible.

Finally, he entered that state of lucid ecstasy in which the very depth of consciousness awakens,

enters into communication with the living Spirit of things, and projects in dreams the images of past and future. His eyes close, and the outer world disappears. The Seer contemplates truth in the light which floods his whole being, and converts his intelligence into a burning furnace.

Then came the clash of thunder, the mountain shook to its foundations. A whirlwind coming from distant space carried off the Seer to the top of the temple at Jerusalem. Down below shone roofs and minarets like a forest of gold and silver. Hymns were ascending from the Holy of Holies, waves of incense arose from every altar and formed in eddying circles beneath his feet. People in festive garb filled the porticoes, whilst women joyfully sang into the air their hymns of ardent devotion. Trumpets sounded, and a mighty chorus of voices exclaimed : "Glory to the Messiah ! the King of Israel !" "Thou shalt be this King if thou wilt worship me," said a voice from below. "Who art thou ?" asked Jesus.

Again the wind carried him through space to the summit of a mountain. At his feet lay, in their golden glory, all the kingdoms of the earth.

"I am the king of spirits and the prince of the earth," answered the voice from below. . . . "I know who thou art," said Jesus ; "thy forms are innumer-



able, thy name is Satan. Appear in thy earthly form." . . . The figure of a crowned monarch appeared, enthroned in the clouds. Around his imperial head shone a faint, pale halo. The sombre figure stood out against a blood-red nimbus, with its pallid, ghastly countenance, and eyes flashing forth a cold steely light. He said: "I am Cæsar. Only bow down before me, and I will give thee all these kingdoms." Jesus said to him: "Get thee behind me, tempter! It is written: Thou shalt worship only the Lord thy God." Immediately the vision faded away.

Finding himself alone in the cave of Engaddi, Jesus said: "By what sign shall I overcome the powers of the earth?" . . . "By the sign of the Son of Man," said a voice from above. "Show me this sign," said Jesus.

Away on the horizon appeared a shining constellation, four stars in the sign of a cross. The Galilean recognised the sign of ancient initiations familiar to Egypt and preserved by the Essenes. When the world was young, the sons of Japhet had worshipped it as the sign of earthly and heavenly fire, the sign of Life with all its joys, of Love with all its wonders. Later the Egyptian initiates had seen in it the symbol of the great mystery, Trinity dominated by Unity, the image of

the sacrifice of the ineffable Being who breaks himself in order to manifest himself in the universe. Symbol at once of life, death, and resurrection, it covered innumerable hypogea, temples and tombs. . . . The brilliant cross grew larger and came nearer, as though attracted by the heart of the Seer. The four living stars shone forth like suns of light and glory. "Behold the magic sign of Life and Immortality!" said the heavenly voice. "In ancient times it was in the possession of men, now it is lost. Wilt thou restore it to them?" . . . "I will," said Jesus. . . . "Then look, behold thy destiny!"

Suddenly the four stars disappeared. It was night; loud thunderclaps shook the mountains to their foundations; whilst from the depths of the Dead Sea emerged a dark, sombre mountain, surmounted with a black cross. On it was nailed a man in the agony of death. The mountain was covered with a demon-stricken mob, crying out in hellish jeers: "If thou art the Messiah, save thyself!" The Seer opened wide his eyes, then fell back, cold drops of perspiration streaming down his face, for this crucified man was himself. . . . He had understood. In order to overcome, he must identify himself with this terror-stricken image, summoned up by himself, and placed there before him like an evil-boding omen. Wavering in his uncertainty as

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to the emptiness of infinite space, Jesus felt at once the tortures of the crucified one, the insults of men, and the profound silence of heaven. . . . "Thou canst take it or reject it," said the angelic voice. The vision of the cross-phantom and the crucified victim began to grow dim, when of a sudden Jesus saw once more by his side the sick wretches of the pool of Siloam, and behind them myriads of despairing souls murmuring, with clasped hands: "Without thee we are lost; save us, thou who knowest how to love!" Then the Galilean slowly arose, and with outstretched arms, in an attitude of supreme love, exclaimed: "Mine be the cross! Let but the world be saved!" Immediately Jesus felt a mighty rending asunder throughout his frame, and a terrible groan escaped his lips. . . . At the same time the dark, sombre mountain and the cross faded away, a gentle radiant beam of divine felicity entered the soul of the Seer, and from the heights of heaven a voice descended, saying, "Satan is no longer master! Death is overthrown! Glory to the Son of Man! Glory to the Son of God!"

When Jesus awoke from this vision nothing around him had changed; the rising sun cast his golden beams on the sides of the cave of Engaddi; soothing dewdrops—veritable tears of angelic love—bathed his bruised feet, and light clouds of mist

were rising from the Red Sea. But he was no longer the same. A definite event had taken place in the fathomless depths of his consciousness, he had solved the problem of life and had won peace, the great certainty had entered his soul. From the rejection of his earthly being, which he had trodden under foot and cast into the pit, a new consciousness had arisen in radiant majesty. . . . He knew he had become the Messiah by an irrevocable act of his will.

Soon after, he once more descended to the village of the Essenes, where he learned that John the Baptist had just been seized by Antipas and imprisoned in the fortress of Makerous. Far from showing fear at this omen, he saw therein a sign that the time was ripe and that he in his turn must act. Accordingly, he gave out to the Essenes that he was about to preach in Galilee, "the Gospel of the kingdom of Heaven." That meant, to bring the great mysteries within reach of the poor and lowly, to translate for them the doctrine of the initiates. Like boldness had never been seen since the days when Çakia Mouni, the last Buddha, moved by mighty compassion, had preached on the banks of the Ganges. The same sublime compassion for humanity animated Jesus. To it he joined inner illumination, capacity for loving, a

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grandeur of faith and energy of action belonging to himself alone. From the abyss of death which he had fathomed, and whose bitterness he had tasted beforehand, he brought both hope and life for all his brethren.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS—POPULAR AND ESOTERIC INSTRUCTION—MIRACLES—APOSTLES —WOMEN

HITHERTO I have endeavoured to illuminate with its own light that portion of the life of Jesus which the Gospels have left in comparative obscurity, or wrapped around with the veil of legend. I have related by what kind of initiation and development of soul and thought the great Nazarean attained to the Messianic consciousness. In a word, I have endeavoured to reconstruct the inner genesis of the Christ. The rest of my task will be all the easier if this genesis be once acknowledged. The public life of Jesus has been related in the Gospels. These narratives contain divergences and contradictions as well as additions. The legend which overlies or exaggerates certain mysteries may still be traced here and there, but from the whole there is set free such a unity of thought and action, so powerful and original a character, that we invincibly feel ourselves in the presence of reality and of life. These

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inimitable stories cannot be reconstructed ; their childlike simplicity and symbolical beauty tell us more than any amplifications can do. But what is needed nowadays is the illumination of the rôle of Jesus by esoteric traditions and truths, showing the signification and bearing of his double teaching.

What were these good tidings of which he was the bearer, this already famous Essene who had now returned from the shores of the Dead Sea to his native Galilee to preach there the Gospel of the Kingdom ? How was he to change the face of the world ? The thoughts of the propets had just found their realisation in him. Strong in the entire gift of his very being, he now came to share with men this kingdom of heaven which he had won in meditation and strife, in torments of pain and boundless joy. He came to rend asunder the veil which the ancient religion of Moses had cast over the future beyond the tomb. He came to say : " Believe, love, act, and let hope be the soul of your deeds. Beyond this earth there is a world of souls, a more perfect life. This I know, for I come therefrom ; thither will I lead you. But mere aspiration for that world will not suffice. To attain it you must begin by realising it here below, first in yourselves, afterwards in humanity. By what means ? By Love and active Charity."

So the young prophet came to Galilee. He did not say he was the Messiah, but discussed in the synagogues concerning the laws and the prophets. He preached on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, in fishermen's boats, by the fountains, in the oases of verdure abounding between Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Korazin. He healed the sick by laying-on of hands, a mere look or command, often by his presence alone. Multitudes followed him, and already numerous disciples attached themselves to him. These he recruited from among the fishermen, tax-collectors, from the common people, in a word. Those of upright, unsullied nature, possessed of an ardent faith, were the ones he wanted, and these he irresistibly attracted to himself. He was guided in his choice by that gift of second sight, which has ever been the peculiarity of men of action, but especially of religious initiators. A single look enabled him to fathom the depths of a soul. He needed no other test, and when he said: "Follow me!" he was obeyed. A single gesture summoned to his side the timid and hesitating, to whom he said: "Come unto me, ye that are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my



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burden is light.”<sup>1</sup> He divined the innate thoughts of men, who in trouble and confusion recognised the Master. At times, he recognised in unbelief uprightness of heart. When Nathaniel said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Jesus replied: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”<sup>2</sup> From his adepts he required neither oaths nor profession of faith; simply love and belief in himself. He put into practice the common possession of goods as a principle of fraternity among his own.

Jesus thus began to realise, within his small group of followers, the Kingdom of Heaven he wished to establish on earth. The Sermon on the Mount offers us an image of this kingdom already formed in germ, along with a *résumé* of the popular teaching of Jesus. He is seated on the top of a hill; the future initiates are grouped at his feet; farther down the slope the eager crowd drinks in the words which fall from his mouth. What is the doctrine of the new teacher? Fasting or maceration or public penance? No; he says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” Then he unrolls in ascending order the four final beatitudes, the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 47.

marvellous power of humility, of sorrow for others, of the inner goodness of the heart and of hunger and thirst after righteousness. . . . Then, in glowing colours he depicts the active and triumphant virtues, compassion, purity of heart, militant kindness, and finally martyrdom for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God." Like the sound of a golden bell, this promise gives his listeners a faint glimpse of the starry heavens above the Master's head. Then they see the humble virtues, no longer in the guise of poor emaciated women in grey penitents' robes, but transformed into beatitudes, into virgins of light whose brightness effaces the splendour of the lilies and the glory of Solomon. With the gentle breath of their palm leaves they scatter over these thirsting souls the fragrant perfumes of the heavenly kingdom.

The wonder is that this kingdom expands, not in the distant heavens, but in the hearts of the listeners. They exchange looks of astonishment with one another ; these poor in spirit have, of a sudden, become so rich. Mightier than Moses, the soul's magician has struck their hearts, from which rushes up an immortal spring of life. His teaching to the people may be summed up in the sentence : The kingdom of heaven is within you !

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Now that he lays before them the means necessary to attain to this unheard-of happiness, they are no longer astonished at the extraordinary things he asks of them : to kill even the desire for evil, to forgive offences, to love their enemies. So powerful is the stream of love with which his heart overflows, that he carries them away along the current. In his presence they find everything easy. Mighty the novelty, singular the boldness of such teaching. The Galilean prophet sets the inner life of the soul above all outer practices, the invisible above the visible, the Kingdom of Heaven above the benefits of earth. He commands that the choice be made between God and man. Then, summing up his doctrine, he says, "Love your neighbour as yourself ! . . . Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect !" Thus, in popular form, he afforded a glimpse of the whole profundity of science and morals. For the supreme commandment of the initiation is to reproduce divine perfection in the perfecting of the soul, and the secret of science lies in the chain of analogy and correspondences, uniting in ever-enlarging circles the particular to the universal, the finite to the infinite.

- ✕ If such was the public and purely moral teaching of Jesus, it is evident that in addition he gave

private instruction to his disciples, parallel with and explanatory of the former, showing its inner meaning and penetrating to the very depths of the spiritual truth he held of the esoteric traditions of the Essenes and of his own existence. As this tradition was violently crushed by the Church from the second century onwards, the majority of theologians no longer knew the real bearing of the Christ's words, with their sometimes double and triple meanings, and saw none but the primary and literal signification. For those who deeply studied the doctrine of the mysteries in India, Egypt, and Greece, the esoteric thought of the Christ animates not merely his slightest word, but every act of his life. Dimly perceptible in the three Synoptics, it springs into complete evidence in the Gospel of John. Here may be stated an instance touching an essential point of the doctrine :—

Jesus happens to be passing by Jerusalem. He is not yet preaching in the temple, though he heals the sick and gives instruction to his friends. The work of love must prepare the ground into which the fruitful seed shall fall. Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, had heard of the new prophet. Filled with curiosity, though unwilling to compromise himself in the eyes of his sect, he re-

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quests with the Galilean a secret interview, which is granted. The Pharisee calls at his dwelling by night and says to him : " Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus replied : " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus asks if it is possible for a man to enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. Jesus answered : " Verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." <sup>1</sup>


Under this evidently symbolical form, Jesus sums up the ancient doctrine of regeneration already known in the mysteries of Egypt. To be born again of water and of the Spirit, to be baptized by water and by fire, mark two degrees of initiation, two stages of the inner and spiritual development of man. Water here represents truth perceived intellectually, *i.e.* in an abstract and general manner. It purifies the soul and develops its spiritual germ.

A new birth by the Spirit, or baptism by (heavenly) fire, signifies the assimilation of the truth by the will in such a way that it may become the blood and life, the very soul of every action. From this

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 5.

results the complete victory of spirit over matter, the absolute mastery of the spiritualised soul over the body transformed into a docile instrument; a mastery which awakens its dormant faculties, opens its inner sense, and gives it an intuitive insight into truth, and a direct action of soul on soul. This state is equivalent to the heavenly one which Jesus Christ called the kingdom of God. Baptism by water, or intellectual initiation, is accordingly the first step in rebirth; baptism by the spirit is total rebirth, a transformation of the soul by the fire of intelligence and will, and consequently, to a certain extent, of the elements of the body—in a word, a radical regeneration. From this come the exceptional powers it gives to man.

This is the earthly signification of the eminently theosophical conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. There is also a special signification which might briefly be called the esoteric doctrine concerning the constitution of man. According to this doctrine, man is threefold: body, soul, and spirit. He has an immortal and indivisible part, the spirit; a perishable and divisible part, the body. The soul which unites the two shares in the nature of both. Living organism as it is, it possesses an ethereal and fluidic body, similar to the material body, which, but for this invisible double, would



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have neither life, movement, nor unity. According as man obeys the suggestions of the spirit or the impulses of the body, according as he attaches himself to the one or the other, the fluidic body becomes etherealised or dulled ; unifies or becomes disaggregated. Accordingly, it happens that, after physical death, the majority of men have to submit to a second death of the soul, which consists of cleansing itself from the impure elements of their astral body, sometimes even undergoing its slow decomposition ; whilst the completely regenerated man, having formed on this earth his spiritual body, possesses his heaven in himself and enters the region to which his affinity attracts him. . . . Now water, in ancient esoterism, symbolises fluidic matter which is infinitely transformable, as fire symbolises the one spirit. In speaking of rebirth by water and spirit, the Christ makes allusion to that double transformation of his spiritual body, his fluidic envelope which awaits man after death, and without which he cannot enter the kingdom of lofty souls and purified spirits. For "that which is born of the flesh is flesh (*i.e.* chained down and perishable), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (*i.e.* free and immortal). "Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus spoke Jesus to Nicodemus in the silence of the night at Jerusalem. A small lamp, placed between the two, dimly lights their vague, uncertain forms. But the eyes of the Galilean Master shine with mysterious brilliancy through the darkness. How could one help believing in the soul, when looking into those eyes, now gently beaming, now flashing forth the glory of heaven ? The learned Pharisee has seen his knowledge of Scripture texts crumble away, but then he obtains a glimpse of a new world. He has seen a divine light in the face of the prophet, whose long auburn hair is falling over his shoulders. He has felt the powerful warmth emanating from his being draw him to the Master. He has seen small white flames like a magnetic halo appear and disappear around his brow and temples. And then he imagined he felt the breath of the Spirit pass over his heart. Moved to his inmost soul, Nicodemus returned secretly in the silence of the night to his home. He will continue to live among the Pharisees, but in the secrecy of his heart he will remain faithful to Jesus.

Let us note one more important point in this

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 6-8.



teaching. According to the materialistic doctrine, the soul is an ephemeral and accidental resultant of the forces of the body ; in the ordinary spiritualist doctrine it is something abstract, without any conceivable bond with the body ; in the esoteric doctrine—the only rational one—the physical body is a product of the incessant work of the soul, which acts upon it by the similar organism of the astral body, just as the visible universe is only a dynamism of the infinite Spirit. / This is the reason Jesus gives this doctrine to Nicodemus as explanation of the miracles he works. It may indeed serve as a key to the occult healing art, practised by him and by a small number of adepts and saints before as well as after Christ. Ordinary medicine combats the evils of the body by acting on the latter. The adept or saint being a centre of spiritual and fluidic force, acts directly on the soul of the patient, and by his astral on his physical body. It is the same in all magnetic cures ; Jesus operates by means of forces existing in all men, but he operates in large doses by powerful and concentrated projections. He gives the Scribes and Pharisees his power of healing bodies as a proof of his power to pardon and heal the soul, his higher object. The physical cure thus becomes the counter proof of a moral cure which permits of his saying to the man made

whole, "Rise and walk!" Science of to-day tries to explain the phenomenon which the ancients and middle ages called "possession" as being a simple nervous disorder. The explanation is insufficient. Psychologists who attempt to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of the soul see therein a duplication of consciousness, an irruption of its latent part. This question touches that of the different planes of the human consciousness, which acts now on the one now on the other, the changing play being studied in different somnambulistic conditions. It also touches the sensitive world. In any case, it is certain Jesus had the faculty of restoring equilibrium in troubled bodies, and restoring souls to their purest consciousness. "Veritable magic," said Platinus, "is love, with hate its contrary. It is by love and hate that magicians act, through their philters and enchantments." Love in its highest consciousness and supreme power constituted the magic of the Christ. —

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Numerous disciples took part in his inner teaching. Still, in order to give lasting power to the new religion, there was needed an active group of chosen ones who should become the pillars of the spiritual temple he wished to erect over against the other : hence the institution of the apostles. These

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he did not choose from among the Essenes, as he needed men whose natures were vigorous and fresh to implant his religion in the very heart of the people. Two groups of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, the sons of Jonas, on the one hand, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, on the other, all four fishermen by occupation and belonging to respectable families, formed the first apostles. At the beginning of his career Jesus appears to them at Capernaum, by the lake of Gennesareth, where they were engaged in their daily occupation. He takes up his abode with them and converts the whole family. Peter and John stand out as prominent figures among the twelve. . . . Peter, straightforward and narrow-minded, easily influenced by either hope or discouragement, but at the same time a man of action, capable, by reason of his energetic character and absolute faith, of leading the others. . . . John, of a deep hidden nature, enthusiastic to such a degree that Jesus called him "the son of thunder," his ardent soul always concentrated on itself, by disposition melancholy, and given to reverie, though subject to formidable outbursts and apocalyptic visions. His tenderness of soul, spite of all this, was such as the rest never suspected and only the Master knew. John alone, silent and contemplative, will understand the in-

most thought of the Christ. He will be the Evangelist of love and divine intelligence, the esoteric apostle *par excellence*.

Persuaded by his words, convinced by his acts, dominated by his mighty intelligence, and encircled in his magnetic radiance, the apostles followed the Master from town to town. Preaching to the populace alternated with secret instruction as he gradually opened out to them his thoughts. All the same, he still maintained profound silence concerning himself, his own future. He had told them that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that the Messiah would soon come. The apostles were already whispering to one another, "It is he!" and repeating it to others. But Jesus, with gentle dignity, simply called himself "The Son of Man," an expression the esoteric signification of which they did not yet understand, though, in his mouth, it seemed to mean "Messenger of suffering humanity." For he added, "The foxes have their holes, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." It was only in accordance with the popular Jewish idea that the apostles had hitherto considered the Messiah, their simple hopes conceived of the kingdom of heaven as being a political government, of which Jesus would be the crowned king

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and they the ministers. To combat this idea and radically transform it, revealing to the apostles the true Messiah, the spiritual royalty; to communicate to them this sublime truth he called the Father, the supreme force he called the Spirit, mysteriously uniting all souls with the invisible; to show them by his word, life, and death, a true Son of God; to leave them the conviction that they and all men were his brothers and could rejoin him if they wished; and finally to leave them, only after opening to their longing eyes the whole immensity of heaven—this was the mighty work Jesus had commenced on his apostles. “Will they believe or not?” is the question of the drama being played between them and himself. Another question far more poignant and terrible is being asked in the depths of his own consciousness. To this we shall soon give our attention.

For at this hour a wave of joy overwhelmed the tragic thought in the consciousness of the Christ. The tempest has not yet burst over the lake of Tiberias. It is the Galilean springtime of the Gospel, the dawn of the kingdom of God, the mystic union of the initiate with his spiritual family, which follows and travels with him as the procession of paranymphs follows the bridegroom

in the parable. The believing crowd hurries along in the footsteps of the beloved Master on the banks of the azure lake enclosed in the glorious hills as in a golden bowl. They go from the fragrant banks of Capernaum to Bethsaida's orange groves and the mountainous Chorazin, where the lake of Gennesareth is bordered by shady palms. In this procession the women have a place apart. The Master is everywhere surrounded by the mothers or sisters of his disciples, by timid virgins, or repentant Magdalenes. Attentive and faithful, impelled by passionate love, they scatter along his path eternal blossoms of sadness, and hope. They at any-rate need no proof that he is the Messiah: a single look into his face is sufficient for them. The wonderful felicity emanating from his aura, added to the note of divine unexpressed suffering they instinctively feel, persuades them that he is the Son of God. Jesus had early stifled in himself the cry of the flesh, during his stay among the Essenes he had tamed the might of the senses. This had given him an empire over souls and the divine power of pardon, a true angelic bliss. He says to the sinning woman now, with dishevelled hair, kneeling at the Master's feet, over which she pours the precious ointment: "Much shall be forgiven her, for she

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has loved much!" Sublime thought, containing an entire redemption, for pardon sets free.

The Christ is the liberator and restorer of women, in spite of St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church who, by lowering woman to the rôle of man's servant, have wrongly interpreted the Master's thought. She had been glorified in Vedic times; Buddha had mistrusted her; the Christ has raised her by restoring her mission of love and divination. The initiate Woman represents the soul of Humanity; Aisha, as Moses had named it, *i.e.* the power of Intuition; the loving and seeing Faculty. The impetuous Mary Magdalene, out of whom, according to the biblical expression, Jesus had driven seven devils, became the most ardent of his disciples. She it was who first, St. John tells us, saw the divine Master, the spiritual Christ risen from the tomb. Legend has been obstinately bent on seeing in the passionate believing woman the greatest worshipper of Jesus, the heart-initiate, and legend has not been mistaken, for her history represents the whole regeneration of woman as desired by the Christ.

It was in the farm of Bethany, near Martha and Mary Magdalene, that Jesus loved to rest from the labours of his mission, and prepare himself for supreme tests. There he lavished his tenderest

words of comfort, and in sweet discourse spoke of the divine mysteries he dared not yet confide to his disciples. At times, as the sun was setting in the golden horizon of the west, half-hidden in the branches of the olive-groves, Jesus would become pensive, and a veil would overshadow his illumined countenance. He thought of the difficulties of his work, of the uncertain faith of the apostles, of the hostile powers of the world. The temple, Jerusalem, humanity itself, with its crime and ingratitude, seemed to overwhelm him beneath a living mountain.

Would his arms upraised to heaven be strong enough to grind this mountain to powder, or would he himself be crushed beneath its mighty bulk? Then he spoke vaguely of a terrible trial which awaited him, and also of his coming end. Awed by his solemn tones, the women dared not question him. However unchangeable the Master's serenity of soul might be, they understood that it was as though wrapped about with the shroud of an indescribable sadness, separating him from the joys of earth. They had a presentiment of the prophet's destiny, they felt his invincible power of resolution. What was the meaning of those gloomy clouds which arose from the direction of Jerusalem? Wherefore this



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burning wind of fever and death, passing over their hearts as over the blighted hills of Judæa, with their violet cadaverous hues ? One evening—a star of mystery—a tear shone in Jesus' eyes. A shudder passed through the frames of the women, their tears also flowed in silence. They were lamenting over him ; he was lamenting over all mankind !

## CHAPTER V

### STRUGGLE WITH THE PHARISEES—FLIGHT TO CÆSAREA—THE TRANSFIGURATION

THIS Galilean springtime, during which the dawn of the Kingdom of Heaven seemed to rise upon the attentive multitudes, lasted two years. Now, however, the sky darkened, sinister flashes appeared, forerunners of catastrophe. The storm burst upon the small family at Galilee like one of those tempests which sweep the lake of Gennesareth, and in their wild fury engulf the fishermen's frail barques. Jesus was in no way surprised at the consternation and terror of his disciples, he fully expected it. It was impossible that his preaching and increasing popularity should not stir the religious authorities of the Jews, and just as impossible that the struggle should not be a complete one between these authorities and himself. On the contrary, from this conflict alone could light flash forth.

At the time of Jesus the Pharisees formed a compact body of six thousand men. Their name Perishin means "separate" or "distinguished."

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Of a lofty and often heroic though narrow and haughty patriotism, they represented the party of national restoration ; their existence dating back from the Maccabees. They acknowledged both an oral and a written tradition. They believed in angels, a future life and resurrection, but the glimpses of esoterism which came to them from Persia they buried beneath the darkness of a gross material interpretation. Strict observers of the law, though quite opposed to the spirit of the prophets who placed religion in the love of God and of men, they made piety consist of rites and ceremonies, fasts and public penance. On great occasions they were to be seen in the open streets, their faces covered with soot, praying aloud with contrite mien, and ostentatiously distributing alms. In contradistinction to all this they lived in luxury, eagerly intriguing after authority and power. None the less were they the chiefs of the democratic party, holding the people under their control.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, represented the sacerdotal and aristocratic party. They were composed of families whose pretension it was to have exercised priesthood by hereditary right ever since the time of David. Extreme in their conservatism they rejected oral tradition, accepted nothing but the letter of the law, and denied the existence

of the soul and a future life. They ridiculed alike the stormy practices of the Pharisees and their extravagant beliefs. For them, religion consisted entirely in sacerdotal ceremonies. Under the Seleucides they had deprived the pontificate of power, as they were in complete accord with the pagans, and were even imbued with Greek sophistry and refined Epicurism. Under the Maccabees the Pharisees had been ejected from the pontificate, though, under Herod and the Romans, they had apparently regained this position. The Sadducees were stern and hard-hearted as men, and lovers of good cheer as priests, possessed of one faith, that of their own superiority, and of one idea, the determination to maintain the power tradition had handed down to them.

In such a religion what could Jesus find, Jesus the initiate, inheritor of the prophets, the Seer of Engaddi, seeking in social order the image of the divine, in which justice reigns over life, science over justice, and love and wisdom over all three? . . . In the temple, instead of supreme science and initiation, he found materialistic and agnostic ignorance, playing on religion as on a power-giving instrument, in other words, priestly imposture. . . . In schools and synagogues, instead of the bread of life, and the dew from heaven falling upon men's

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hearts, he saw an interested morality under the veneer of formal worship, *i.e.* hypocrisy. . . . Far above, enthroned in a nimbus of glory, sat almighty Cæsar, the apotheosis of evil and the deification of matter, the sole god of the then world, only possible master of the Sadducees and Pharisees, whether they wished it so or not. In adopting the idea from Persian esoterism as did the prophets, was Jesus wrong in naming this reign the dominion of Satan or Ahrimanes, *i.e.* the rule of matter over spirit, in place of which he wished to substitute that of spirit over matter? Like all great reformers, he attacked not men, who as exceptions, might be excellent, but doctrines and institutions which mould the majority of mankind. The challenge must be delivered, and war declared against the existing powers.

The struggle began in the synagogues of Galilee and continued beneath the porticoes of the temple at Jerusalem, to which Jesus made lengthened visits, preaching and replying to his opponents. In this as throughout his whole career, he acted with that mixture of prudence and boldness, meditative reserve and impetuous action, which characterised his wonderfully well-balanced nature. He did not take the offensive against his opponents, but waited and replied to their attack, which never tarried,

for, from the very beginning of his ministry, the Pharisees had been jealous of him by reason of his popularity and his healing of the sick. They quickly suspected him to be their most dangerous enemy. Accosting him with that mocking urbanity, that cunning malevolence, veiled beneath a mask of hypocritical gentleness, in which they were past-masters, in their rôle as learned doctors and men of importance and authority, they asked what reasons he had for having dealings with publicans and sinners? Why did his disciples dare to pluck ears of corn on the Sabbath day? Such conduct constituted a grave violation of their regulations. With magnanimous gentleness, Jesus replied in words at once tender and courteous. He tried on them his gospel of love, spoke of the love of God, who rejoices more over one repentant sinner than over many just persons. He related to them the parables of the lost sheep and of the prodigal son. In embarrassed astonishment they held their peace. Uniting again, they returned to the charge, reproaching him for healing the sick on the Sabbath day. "Hypocrites!" replied Jesus, a flash of indignation illumining his eyes, "do not you on the Sabbath day remove the chain from your own oxen's neck and lead them away to the watering-trough? May not therefore the daughter of Abra-

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ham be delivered this same day from the chains of Satan?" No longer knowing what to reply, the Pharisees accused him of casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub. With quite as much wit as logical acumen, Jesus replied that the devil does not cast himself out, adding that sin against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but not sin against the Holy Ghost, signifying thereby that he attached slight importance to insults against himself personally, but that a denial of the Good and the True, when once established, constitutes intellectual perversity the supreme vice and an irremediable evil. This was a declaration of war. He was called Blasphemer! Agent of Beelzebub! which accusations he answered by the expressions: Hypocrites! Generation of vipers! From this time the struggle continually increased in bitterness. Jesus gave evidence of a close incisive logic, his words lashed like whips and pierced like arrows. He had changed tactics; instead of defending himself, he attacked and replied to charges by other charges more vigorous still, showing no pity for hypocrisy, the one vice at the root of all others. "Why transgress ye the law of God by reason of your traditions? God commanded, Honour thy father and thy mother; you dispense with honouring parents, if, as alternative, money flows into the temple.

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With your lips you serve <sup>Jerusalem</sup> ~~Isaiah~~, but your devotion is devoid of heart."

Jesus ever kept perfect control over himself, though the enthusiasm and greatness of the struggle daily increased. The more he was attacked, the more emphatically did he proclaim himself as the Messiah. He began to utter threats against the temple, to foretell the misfortunes that Israel would undergo, to appeal to the heathen, and to say that the Lord would send other labourers into his vineyard. Thereupon the Pharisees of Jerusalem became anxious. Seeing they could neither impose silence on him nor find any effective retort, they too changed tactics. Their idea now was to ensnare him, so they sent deputations whose object it was to induce him to utter heretical sayings which would warrant the Sanhedrim in laying hands on him as a blasphemer, in the name of the law of Moses, or of having him condemned as a rebel by the Roman governor. Hence the insidious question concerning the woman taken in adultery, and the coin stamped with Cæsar's image. Ever penetrating the designs of his enemies, Jesus, with profound psychology and skilful strategy, disarmed them by his replies. Finding it impossible to effect their object by these means, the Pharisees attempted to intimidate him by annoying him at



every turn. Worked upon and excited by them, the majority of the people began to turn away from Jesus when they saw that he was not restoring the kingdom of Israel. Everywhere, even in the smallest of hamlets, he met suspicious and wily countenances, spies, and treacherous emissaries to track and dishearten him. Some came and said to him, "Depart from here, for Herod (Antipas) is bent on killing thee." He replied proudly, "Go tell that fox; it cannot be that a prophet die out of Jerusalem!" Nevertheless, he was often obliged to cross the sea of Tiberias and take refuge on the eastern bank in order to escape these snares. Nowhere was he now free from danger. Meanwhile John the Baptist was put to death by order of Antipas in the fortress of Makerous. It is said that Hannibal, on seeing the head of his brother Hasdrubal, killed by the Romans, exclaimed: "Now I recognise the fate of Carthage." Jesus could recognise his own fate in the death of his precursor. He had had no doubt of this ever since his vision at Engaddi; had begun his work, knowing the inevitable end, and yet this news, when brought by the sorrow-stricken disciples of the prophet of the wilderness, struck Jesus as a death-warning. He exclaimed: "They did not recognise him, but have done with him as they

wished, thus shall the Son of Man suffer at their hands."

The twelve were troubled and anxious; Jesus was hesitating on his pathway. He did not wish to let himself be taken, but rather, once his work finished, to offer himself of his own free will, and die as a prophet at the hour he himself should choose. Already hunted down during the whole of the past year, accustomed to escape from the enemy by making marches and counter-marches, disheartened with the people, whose apathy, after days of enthusiasm, he was keenly conscious of, Jesus determined once more to escape with his disciples. Reaching the summit of a mountain, he turned round to cast one final lingering look on his beloved lake, on whose banks he had wished the dawn of the Kingdom of Heaven to shine. His eyes wandered over those towns lying by the water-side, or rising tier upon tier along the mountain-side, half buried in their verdant oases, and now glittering with white beneath the golden veil of twilight; those beloved towns in which he had sown the words of life, and which now abandoned him. A presentiment of the future came over him. With prophetic vision he saw this splendid country changed into a wilderness beneath the vengeful hand of Ishmael, and those words, devoid of anger, though full of

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sorrow and bitterness, fell from his lips : "Woe unto thee, Capernaum ; woe unto thee Chorazin ; woe unto thee Bethsaida !" Then turning towards the heathen world, accompanied by his disciples, he took the path leading along the Jordan valley from Gadara to Cæsarea Philippi.

Sad and long was the route of the fugitive band across the mighty plain of reeds and the marshes of the upper Jordan under the burning Syrian sun. The nights were passed beneath the tents of shepherds, or with such Essenes as were living in the small hamlets of this abandoned country. The anxious disciples proceeded with downcast eyes ; the master, filled with sorrow, remained plunged in silent meditation. He was reflecting on the impossibility of the triumph of his doctrine by preaching to the people, and on the unremitting plottings of his enemies. The final struggle was becoming imminent, he had reached a terrible difficulty ; how was he to escape ? On the other hand, his thoughts dwelt with anxiety on his spiritual family now scattered abroad, and especially on the twelve apostles, who, in faith and trust, had left everything—family, profession, and fortune—to follow him, and who, in spite of all, would soon be heart-broken and deceived in their mighty hope of a triumphant Messiah. Could he leave them to

themselves? Had the truth sufficiently penetrated their souls? Would they believe in him, and in his doctrine, at all events? Did they know who he was? Dominated by this thought, he one day asked them: "Whom say men that I, the Son of Man, am?" They replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then Jesus said unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>1</sup>

In the mouth of Peter, and the thought of Jesus, these words have not the signification the Church at a later date wished to give them: "Thou art the Elect of Israel announced by the prophets." In the Hindoo, the Egyptian, and the Greek initiation, the term "Son of God" signified "a consciousness identified with divine truth, a will capable of manifesting it." According to the prophets, this Messiah must be the greatest of these manifestations. He would be the Son of Man, *i.e.* the Elect of earthly Humanity; the Son of God, *i.e.* the Envoy of heavenly Humanity, and as such having in himself the Father or Spirit, who, by Humanity, reigns over the universe.

At this affirmation of the faith of the apostles Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 13-16.

felt an immense joy. So his disciples had understood him ; he would live in them, and the bond between heaven and earth would be re-established. Jesus said to Peter, "Happy art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven." By this reply Jesus gives Peter to understand that he considers him as an initiate, as he himself was, and also possessed of a deep insight into truth. This is the true, the only revelation, this is "the stone on which the Christ wishes to build his Church, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." Jesus relies on the Apostle Peter, only in so far as he shall have this intuition. A moment later, the apostle reverting to the ordinary, fear-stricken Peter, the Master treats him in quite a different fashion. Jesus had announced to his disciples that he was about to be put to death at Jerusalem, and Peter protested with the words, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee !" But Jesus, as though seeing a temptation of the flesh in this impulse of sympathy, attempting to shake his mighty resolution, turned sharply round to the apostle and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. xvi. 21-23). And the master's im-

perious gesture seemed to say, "Forward through the desert!" Intimidated by his solemn voice and stern look, the apostles bowed their heads in silence, and resumed their journey over the stone hills of the Gaulonitide. This flight, by which Jesus brought his disciples out of Israel, resembled a march towards the problem of his Messianic destiny, the key to which he was seeking.

They reached the gates of Cæsarea. That town, which had become pagan since the time of Antiochus the Great, was sheltered within a verdant oasis near the Jordan's source, at the foot of Hermon's snowy peaks. It had its amphitheatre, and was resplendent with costly palaces and Grecian temples. Jesus crossed it, and continued to the spot at which the Jordan in a clear bubbling stream issues from a mountain cavern, like the stream of life springing from the profound bosom of nature. There was erected a small temple dedicated to Pan; and in the grotto, on the banks of the stream, numerous columns, marble nymphs, and pagan divinities. The Jews held in horror these tokens of idolatrous worship, Jesus contemplated them with an indulgent smile. In them he recognised the imperfect effigies of the divine beauty, whose radiant models he bore within his own soul. He had not come to utter maledictions against paganism, but to transform it; not

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to scatter anathema on earth and its mysterious powers, but to point out to it the way to heaven. His heart was large enough, and his doctrine sufficiently vast, to embrace all people, and to say to men of every religion : "Raise your heads, and learn that you all have one same father." And yet, there he was at the extreme limit of Israel, hunted like a wild beast, stifled between two peoples who rejected him alike. In front, the heathens who did not yet understand him, and on whom his words fell powerless; behind, the Jews, a people which stoned his prophets, and stopped its ears, so as not to hear its Messiah; whilst all the time the Pharisees and Sadducees were watching their prey. What superhuman courage, what unprecedented power of action would be needed to crush all these obstacles, to penetrate beyond heathen idolatry and Jewish harshness right to the heart of that suffering humanity he loved with every fibre of his being, and induce it to listen to his resurrection message! Then suddenly his mind went back to bygone times, descending once again the stream of the Jordan, Israel's sacred river, passing from the temple of Pan to that of Jerusalem, measuring the distance which separated ancient paganism from the universal prophetic thought, and, regaining its source, as an eagle its

nest, returned from the anguish of Cæsarea to the vision of Engaddi ! And now, from the depths of the Dead Sea, he sees this terrible phantom of the cross once more spring forth ! . . . Had the hour of the great sacrifice at length come ? Jesus, like all men, possessed two consciousnesses ; the earthly one lulled him with illusions, saying : "Who knows ? Perhaps I shall escape this destiny." The other, the divine one, repeated implacably : "The path of victory passes through the gate of anguish." Must he choose this latter voice ?

At all important epochs in his life we see Jesus withdraw to the mountain to pray. Had not the Vedic sage said, "Prayer upholds heaven and rules the Gods ?" Jesus knew this greatest of all forces. Usually he admitted of no companion in this mountain solitude when he descended into the inmost elements of his being. This time, however, he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, to spend the night on the summit of a lofty mountain. Legend states this to have been Mount Tabor. There, between the Master and three of the greatest initiates among the disciples, the mysterious scene related in the Gospels under the name of the *Transfiguration*, took place ! According to Matthew, the apostles saw the Master's form, luminous and apparently



diaphanous, appear in the transparent penumbra of the Eastern night. His face shone like the sun, and his garments became brilliant as the light; at his side appeared two figures, which they took for those of Moses and Elijah. As, trembling, they emerged from their strange prostration, which seemed to them at once a profounder sleep and a more intense waking state, they saw the Master alone by their side, restoring them to full consciousness by his touch. The transfigured Christ they had contemplated in this dream was never effaced from their memory (Matt. xvii. 1-8).

But what had Jesus himself seen and passed through during that night which preceded the most decisive act of his prophetic career? A gradual effacing of earthly things, beneath the ardour of prayer, a rapturous ascent from sphere to sphere, he seemed by degrees to be returning along the depths of his consciousness into some previous existence, an altogether spiritual and divine one. Far in the distance were suns, worlds, earths, vortices of suffering incarnations; now he was conscious of one homogeneous atmosphere, one fluid substance, one intelligent light. Within this radiance legions of celestial beings form a moving vault, a firmament of ethereal bodies, white as snow, whence beam forth gentle flashes of light.

On the shining cloud where he was standing six men in priestly robes, and mighty of stature, raise aloft, with joined hands, a dazzling Chalice. These are the six Messiahs who have already appeared on earth ; the seventh is himself, and this Cup signifies the Sacrifice he must undergo, by incarnating himself on earth in his turn. Beneath the cloud is heard the roar of thunder ; there yawns a black abyss ; the circle of generations, the pit of life and death, the terrestrial hell. The Sons of God with suppliant gesture raise the Cup, the very firmament of heaven is silent, as Jesus, in token of assent, extends his arms in the form of a cross as though he wished to embrace the whole universe. Then the Sons of God bow down their faces to the earth, a band of female angels, with outspread wings and downcast eyes, carry off the incandescent Chalice towards the vault of light. The *hosanna* resounds, with ineffably melodious strains, throughout the heavens. . . . But he, without even listening to it, plunges into the pit. . . .

This is what had taken place long ago among the Essenes, in the bosom of the Father, where the mysterious rites of Eternal Love are celebrated and the revolutions of the constellations pass, light as waves. This is what he had sworn to accomplish, this is the reason of his birth and

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the purpose of his past struggles. And now, once more this mighty oath bound him down at the end of his task.

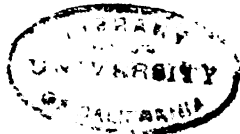
Terrible oath, dreaded chalice ! Still, it must be drained to the dregs. After all this rapturous bliss he awoke in the depths of the pit, on the brink of martyrdom. No further doubt was possible ; the time was at hand. Heaven had spoken and Earth cried aloud for help.

Retracing his steps, Jesus once again descended the valley of the Jordan, and proceeded by slow stages along the road to Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM—THE PROMISE— THE SUPPER—TRIAL OF JESUS—DEATH AND RESURRECTION

"HOSANNA to the son of David!" This was the cry which greeted Jesus as he entered by the eastern gate of Jerusalem, along streets covered with branches of palm trees. They who welcomed him with such enthusiasm were adherents of the Galilean prophet who had assembled from both without and within the town to greet him with this ovation. They were welcoming him who was to free Israel, who would soon be crowned king. Even the twelve apostles still shared this illusion in spite of all Jesus had said. He alone, the proclaimed Messiah, knew that he was advancing to his death, and that only afterwards would even his disciples penetrate the inner sanctuary of his thought. Resolutely was he offering himself, of his own free will, and fully conscious of the end. Hence his resignation, his sweet serenity. As he passed beneath the colossal porch, cut in the gloomy fortress of Jerusalem, the cry resounded



beneath the vault and pursued him like the voice of Destiny, seizing its prey: "Hosanna to the son of David!"

By this solemn entrance into the city, Jesus publicly declared to the religious authorities of Jerusalem, that he took upon himself the rôle of the Messiah, with all its consequences. The following morning he appeared in the temple, in the Gentiles' Court, and, advancing towards the cattle-dealers and money-changers who by usury and the deafening click of money profaned the parvise of the holy place, he uttered against them Isaiah's words: "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." The dealers fled, carrying off their tables and money-bags, intimidated by the partisans of the prophet who formed a solid rampart around him, and even more terrified by his imperious gesture and flashing look. The astonished priests marvelled at this boldness and manifestation of power. A deputation from the Sanhedrim came demanding an explanation, with the words: "By what authority doest thou these things?" To this insidious question Jesus, as was his wont, replied by a question no less embarrassing for his enemies. "Whence was the baptism of John, from heaven or of men?" Had the Pharisees replied: "From

heaven," Jesus would have said: "Then why did you not believe him?" Had they said "From men," they would have had to consider the anger of the people who looked upon John the Baptist as a prophet. Accordingly, they replied: "We cannot tell." "Neither tell I you," said Jesus, "by what authority I do these things." Once the blow ward off, however, he assumed the offensive and added: "Verily I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Then in a parable, he compared them to the wicked husbandman, who kills his master's son so as to inherit the vineyard; and he called himself: "the stone which had become the head of the corner, and which should grind into powder whomsoever it should fall upon." These acts and words show that in making this final journey to Israel's capital, Jesus wished to cut off all retreat. His enemies had long been in possession of the two great keys of accusation necessary for his ruin: his threats against the temple, and the affirmation that he was the Messiah. These last attacks exasperated his enemies; from that moment his death, determined upon by the authorities, was only a matter of time. Since his entrance into Jerusalem, the most influential members of the Sanhedrim, Scribes and Pharisees,

reconciled in common hatred against Jesus, had come to an understanding on the death of this "seducer of the people." They hesitated only on the matter of seizing him in public, for they dreaded a rising of the people. On different occasions already, officials sent against him had returned, won over by his words, or alarmed at the multitudes of people. Often had the soldiers of the temple seen him disappear from their midst in mysterious fashion. So also had the Emperor Domitian, fascinated and struck with blindness so to speak, by the image he wished to condemn, seen Apollonius of Tyana disappear from before the tribunal and from the midst of his guards! The struggle between Jesus and the priests thus continued from day to day with increasing hatred on their side, and on his, an enthusiastic strength and impetuosity, given him by the certainty he felt as to the fatal issue. This was his last assault against the powers of the day; in it he manifested a mighty energy as well as that masculine force which like a coat of mail clothed that sublime tenderness of his, which might be called: The Eternal-Feminine of his soul. This formidable combat ended in terrible maledictions against these debasers of religion: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, who shut up the kingdom of heaven

against such as wish to enter in. Ye fools and blind, who pay tithes and neglect justice, pity, and fidelity; ye are like unto whited sepulchres which appear beautiful from without, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

After having thus branded as religious hypocrisy and false sacerdotal authority what had for centuries held sway, Jesus considered his struggles at an end. He left Jerusalem with his disciples and proceeded to the Mount of Olives. As they ascended, Herod's temple could be seen in all its majesty, with its terraces and vast porticoes, its sculpturing of white marble incrustated with jasper and porphyry, and its dazzling roof of gold and silver. The disciples, discouraged and under the presentiment of a catastrophe, drew the master's attention to the splendour of the building he was leaving for ever. Their words were tinged with melancholy and regret, for, to the last, they had hoped to take their seats therein as judges of Israel around the Messiah, the crowned priest-king. Jesus turned, facing the temple, and said: "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."<sup>1</sup> He was judging the duration of the temple of Jehovah by the moral

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxiv. 2.



worth of those who ruled therein. He meant that fanaticism, intolerance, and hatred were not sufficient arms against the battle-axes and battering-rams of the Roman Cæsar. With the insight of the initiate which had become more intense through that clairvoyance given by the approach of death, he saw the Judaic pride, the policy of their king, the whole Jewish history, terminate fatally in this catastrophe. Triumph did not exist there, it was rather in the prophetic thought, the universal religion, that invisible temple which he alone at that hour had full consciousness of. As for the ancient citadel of Zion and the temple of stone, he already saw the angel of destruction standing, sword in hand, at its doors.

Jesus knew that his hour was nigh, but he did not wish to fall into the hands of the Sanhedrim, so he withdrew to Bethany. As he had a predilection for the Mount of Olives, he came there almost daily to converse with his disciples. From the summit the view was magnificent. The range of vision embraces the rugged mountains of Judæa and Moab, with their purplish-blue tints, whilst away in the distance could be caught a glimpse of the Dead Sea, like a leaden-hued mirror from whose surface rise dense sulphurous mists. At the foot of the mountain stretched Jerusalem, the Temple, and the

citadel of Zion towering above all other edifices. Even in these days, as twilight descends on the dark, mysterious gorges of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, the city of David and of the Christ, protected by the sons of Ishmael, rises in imposing majesty above these gloomy valleys. Its cupolas and minarets reflect the fading light of the heavens and seem to be ever awaiting the angels of judgment. It was there Jesus gave the disciples his final instructions regarding the future of the religion he had come to found, and the destiny of mankind, thus bequeathing them his promise—at once terrestrial and divine—intimately wedded with his esoteric teaching.

Evidently the writers of the Synoptic Gospels have handed down to us the apocalyptic sayings of Jesus amid a confusion which renders them almost impenetrable. Their meaning only begins to become intelligible in John's Gospel. If Jesus had really believed in his return on the clouds, some years after his death, as is admitted according to the naturalistic interpretation; or if he had imagined that the end of the world, and the last judgment of men would take place in this manner, as orthodox theology believes, he would have been a very ordinary visionary indeed, instead of the sage initiate, the sublime seer every word of his teaching and every action of his life proclaim him

to have been. It is evident that here, especially, his words must be understood in their allegorical signification according to the transcendent symbolism of the prophets. John's Gospel, the one which has most fully handed down to us the Master's esoteric teaching, forces this interpretation, so perfectly in accord as it is with the parabolical genius of Jesus, when he relates the Master's words: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now . . . These things have I spoken unto you in parables, but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father."

The solemn promise of Jesus to the apostles embraces four objects, four increasing spheres of planetary and cosmic life: the individual psychic life; the national life of Israel; the earthly evolution and end of humanity as well as the divine. Let us take one by one these four spheres through which radiates the thought of the Christ before his martyrdom, like the setting sun, filling with its glory the whole terrestrial atmosphere right to the zenith, before shining on other worlds.

1. *The first judgment* signifies the ultimate destiny of the soul after death. This is determined by its own inner nature and the acts of its life. I have already expounded this doctrine, with reference to

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. On the Mount of Olives he says to his disciples : "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."<sup>1</sup> And again : "Be ye also ready : for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."<sup>2</sup>

2. *The destruction of the temple and the end of Israel.* "Nation shall rise against nation. . . . They shall deliver you up to be afflicted. . . . Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>

3. *The terrestrial aim of humanity* which is not fixed at some definite epoch, but must be reached by a graduated series of successive realisations. This aim is the coming of the social Christ or the divine man on earth ; *i.e.* the organisation of Truth, Justice, and Love in human society, and consequently, the pacification of the nations. Isaiah had already foretold this distant epoch in a splendid vision beginning with the words : "For I know their works and their thoughts ; it shall come that I will gather all nations and tongues ; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xxiv. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew xxiv. 4-34.

among them," &c., &c.<sup>1</sup> Jesus completing this prophecy explains to his disciples what this sign shall be; the complete unveiling of the mysteries or the coming of the Holy Ghost, whom he also calls the Comforter or "the spirit of Truth which shall lead you into all truth."<sup>2</sup> The apostles shall have this revelation beforehand, the mass of humanity in the course of time. But whenever it takes place in an individual consciousness or among a group of men, it pierces through and through. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."<sup>3</sup> Thus, when the central and spiritual truth is kindled it illumines all other truths throughout creation.

4. *The last judgment* signifies the end of the cosmic evolution of humanity, or its entrance into a definitely spiritual state. This is what Persian Esoterism had called the victory of Ormuzd over the Ahrimanes, or of Spirit over Matter. Hindu Esoterism named it the complete reabsorption of matter by Spirit, or the end of a day of Brahma. After thousands of centuries a period must come when, through series of births and rebirths, incarnations and regenerations, the individuals com-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxvi. 18, &c.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew xxiv. 27.

posing a humanity shall have definitely entered the spiritual state, or been annihilated as conscious souls by evil, *i.e.* by their own passions symbolised by the fire of Gehenna and gnashing of teeth. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds. . . . He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds."<sup>1</sup> The *Son of man*, a generic term, here signifies humanity in its perfect representation, *i.e.* the small number of those who have raised themselves to the rank of Sons of God. his *Sign* is the Lamb and the Cross, *i.e.* Love and Eternal Life. The *Cloud* is the image of the Mysteries which have become translucid, as well as of the subtle matter transfigured by the spirit, of the fluidic substance which is no longer a dense obscure veil, but a light transparent garment of the soul, no longer a gross obstacle, but an expression of the truth; no longer a deceptive appearance but spiritual truth itself, the inner world instantaneously and directly manifested. The *Angels* who gather together the Elect are glorified spirits, who have themselves sprung from humanity. The *Trumpet* they sound symbolises the living word of the Spirit, which lays bare the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxiv. 30, 31.

real nature of the soul, and destroys all lying appearances of matter.

Jesus, feeling his end near, thus explained to his astonished disciples the lofty perspectives which from bygone times had formed part of the doctrine of the mysteries, but to which each religious founder has always given personal form and colour. To engrave these truths on their minds and facilitate their propagation, he summed them up in such images as were characterised by extreme boldness and incisive energy. The revealing image and speaking symbol formed the universal language of the ancient initiates. Such a language possesses a communicative virtue, a power of concentration and duration lacking in the abstract term. In using it, Jesus merely followed the example of Moses and the prophets. He knew the Idea would not immediately be understood, but he wished to impress it in letters of flame in the simple souls of his followers, leaving to succeeding ages the task of generating the powers contained in his word. Jesus feels himself one with all the prophets of the earth who had gone before, as he had done, messengers of Life and of the eternal Word. In this sentiment of unity and solidarity with immutable truth, he dared address to his afflicted disciples the proud words: "Heaven and

earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

These mornings and evenings on the Mount of Olives flew swiftly by. One day, obedient to an impulse peculiar to his ardent and impressionable nature, which caused him suddenly to descend from the most sublime heights to the sufferings of earth, which he felt as his own, he shed tears over Jerusalem, the holy city and its inhabitants, whose frightful destiny he foresaw. His own was also approaching with giant strides. The Sanhedrim had already discussed his fate and decided on his death. Judas Iscariot had already promised to deliver his master into their hands. It was not sordid avarice, but rather ambition and wounded pride which occasioned this black treachery. Judas, a type of cold egoism and absolute positivism, incapable of the faintest idealism, had become a disciple of the Christ merely from a spirit of worldly speculation. He was relying on the earthly and immediate triumph of the prophet, and on his own consequent gain. The Master's profound words: He who wishes to save his life shall lose it, and he who is willing to lose it, shall save it; had no meaning for him. Jesus, in his boundless charity, had received him as one of his disciples, in the hope of changing his



nature. When Judas saw that matters were not proceeding as he wished, that Jesus and his disciples were compromised, and himself deceived in his hopes, his deception became converted into a feeling of rage. The wretch denounced the man, who, in his eyes, was only a false Messiah who had deceived him. The penetrating insight of Jesus told him what was taking place in the mind of the faithless apostle. He now determined he would no longer avoid the destiny whose inextricable folds were daily tightening around him. It was the eve of Easter, so he ordered his disciples to prepare the meal at a friend's house in the town. He foresaw it would be his last repast, and accordingly wished to give it an exceptional solemnity.

Now we enter upon the final act of the Mes-sianic drama. In order to thoroughly understand the spirit and work of Jesus, it has been necessary to shed an inner light on the first two acts of his life : his initiation and public career. Subsequently, the inner drama of his consciousness has been unfolded. The final act of his life, or the drama of the passion, is the logical consequence of the two preceding. Since it is known to all, it explains itself, for the peculiarity of the sublime is that it is at once simple, grandiose, and clear. The drama

of the passion has powerfully contributed to the institution of Christianity. It has drawn tears from every human being possessed of a heart, and converted millions of souls. Throughout all these scenes the gospels are of incomparable beauty. Even John descends from his lofty heights, and his circumstantiated account assumes a character of poignant truth such as an eye-witness alone could give. Every one may live again in himself the divine drama, no one could recreate it. And yet, in ending my task, I must concentrate the rays of esoteric tradition on the three essential events by which the life of the divine Master came to an end : the Holy Supper, the trial of the Messiah, and the Resurrection. If light is thrown on these points, it will be reflected backwards on the whole career of the Christ, and forwards on the succeeding history of Christianity.

The twelve, forming thirteen with the Master, had met in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. The unknown friend, Jesus' host, had covered the floor with a rich carpet. In oriental fashion the Master and his disciples reclined on four large divans in the form of triclinia arranged around the table. When the paschal lamb, and the golden chalice lent by the friend had been brought into the room, and the vases filled with wine, Jesus,

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seated between John and Peter, said: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> Thereupon their countenances became overshadowed; silence filled the air. "The disciple whom Jesus loved," who alone divined everything, bowed his head on the Master's breast. As was usual among the Jews at the Easter meal, not a word was uttered as they ate the bitter herbs and charoset placed before them. Finally Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, he brake it and distributed unto them, saying: "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." He also took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>2</sup>

Such is the institution of the Supper in all its simplicity. It has a far wider signification than is generally granted or known, for not only is the mystical and symbolic act the conclusion and *résumé* of the entire teaching of the Christ, it is the consecration and rejuvenation of a very ancient symbol of initiation. Among the initiates of Egypt and Chaldea, as among the prophets and Essenes, the fraternal agape marked the first

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 19.

stage of initiation. The Communion, under the element of bread, the fruit of the sheaf, signified knowledge of the mysteries of earthly life, as well as a sharing of terrestrial blessings, and consequently the perfect union of affiliated brothers. In the higher degree, communion under the element of wine, the blood of the vine, penetrated through and through by the sun, signified the sharing of heavenly blessings, a participation in spiritual mysteries and divine science. Jesus, in bequeathing these symbols to the apostles, enlarged their meaning. Through them he extends to the whole of mankind fraternity and initiation, formerly limited to the few. To them he adds the profoundest of mysteries, the greatest of forces, that of his own sacrifice. This he converts into the invisible but infrangible chain of love between himself and his followers. It will give his glorified soul a divine power over their hearts, as well as over the hearts of all men. This cup of truth which had come from distant prophetic ages, this golden chalice of initiation which the old Essene had offered him in addressing him as prophet, this chalice of celestial love the Sons of God had offered him in the ecstasy of his loftiest rapture—this cup in which he now sees his own blood reflected—he now gives over to

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his well-beloved disciples with the ineffable tenderness of a last farewell.

Do the apostles see and understand this redeeming, world-embracing thought? It shines in the Master's profound though sorrowful glance, as he turns from the "disciple he loved" to the one about to betray him. No, they do not yet understand; they seem to breathe with difficulty, as though under the power of some frightful dream; a kind of heavy, ruddy vapour floats in the air, and they wonder as to the source of that strange radiance about the Christ head. When, finally, Jesus tells them that he is about to spend the night in prayer on the Mount of Olives, and, as he rises, requests them to follow him, they no longer doubt as to what is about to happen.

. . . . .

The night is past; the anguish of Gethsemane at an end. With terrifying clearness he has seen the infernal circle about to destroy him grow less and less. In the horror of the situation, and the dreadful momentary expectation of being seized by his enemies, a shudder passed through his frame; for a moment his soul shrank before the tortures that awaited him; drops of bloody sweat stood on his brow. Then prayer came to his aid. . . . Confused cries, torches flashing

beneath the gloomy olive-trees, the clash of arms, were so many signs testifying to the approach of a band of soldiers sent by the Sanhedrim. Judas, at their head, kisses his Master, so that they may recognise the prophet. Jesus returns the kiss with a look of ineffable compassion, and says to him : "Friend, wherefore art thou come ?" The effect of this gentleness, this brotherly kiss given in exchange for the basest treason, will be such on that heart—notwithstanding its hardness—that, a moment later, Judas, overcome with horror and remorse, will take his own life. And now, with rude, cruel hands, the soldiers have seized the Galilean rabbi. After a brief resistance the terrified disciples have fled. Peter and John alone remain at hand, and follow the Master to the tribunal. Their hearts are well-nigh broken as they anxiously await his fate. Jesus has now regained control over himself ; from that moment not a single protest or complaint will break from his lips.

The entire Sanhedrim is hastily assembled, and Jesus is brought into their presence at midnight, for the court is determined to deal promptly with the dangerous prophet. Priests and sacrificers, turbans on their heads and wearing purple, yellow and violet tunics, are solemnly seated in a semi-

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circle. In their midst sits Caiaphas, the chief priest, wearing on his head the "migbâh"; at each end of the arc, on two small tribunes sit the clerks, one for acquittal, the other for condemnation: *advocatus Dei*, *advocatus Diaboli*. Jesus, in his white Essenian robe, stands impressive in the centre. Officers of justice, armed with ropes and thongs, men with bared arms and evil-looking eyes, stand around. Witnesses for the accusation alone are present; there is not one for the defence. The high priest, the supreme magistrate, is the principal accuser; the trial, apparently a measure of public safety against a crime or religious treason, is in reality the preventive vengeance of an anxious priesthood which feels its power in danger.

Caiaphas rises and accuses Jesus of being a seducer of the people, a "mésit." A few witnesses taken at hazard from the crowd give their depositions, but only succeed in contradicting one another. Finally, one of them reports the words of Jesus, "I can destroy the temple, and build it again in three days"—words which had been considered blasphemous, and which the Nazarene had more than once flung in the face of the Pharisees under Solomon's porch. Jesus holds his peace. "Answerest thou nothing?" asks the high priest.

Jesus, who knows he will be condemned, and is unwilling to lavish words to no purpose, still makes no reply. These words, however, even if proved, would not form sufficient motive for a death penalty. A graver avowal is needed. To force one, Caiaphas, the cunning Sadducee, addresses him a question involving his honour, the vital question of his mission. The greatest skill often consists in going straight to the root of a matter. "If thou art the Messiah, say so now!" Jesus at first replies evasively, thus proving that he is not their dupe. "If I say it, you will not believe me, but if I ask you the same question you will give me no answer." As Caiaphas does not succeed in his artifice, he uses his authority as high priest, and solemnly says: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Thus called upon either to retract or to affirm his mission before the highest representative of the religion of Israel, Jesus no longer hesitates. He replies calmly, "Thou hast said. Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thus expressing himself in the prophetic language of Daniel, and of the book of Henoch, Jehoshoua, the Essene initiate does not address Caiaphas as an



individual. He knows that the Sadducee agnostic is incapable of understanding him, and accordingly speaks to the sovereign priest of Jehovah, and through him to all future priests and priesthoods of earth, saying to them : After my mission, sealed by death, the reign of unexplained religious Law is at an end, both in principle and in deed. The Mysteries shall be revealed, and man shall see the divine through the human. Religions and acts of worship which cannot be demonstrated and vivified by one another shall be void of authority. This, according to the esoterism of the prophets and Essenes, is the meaning of the Son sitting on the right hand of the Father. Thus understood, Jesus' reply to the high priest of Jerusalem contains the intellectual and scientific testament of the Christ to the religious authorities of the earth, just as the institution of the Supper contains his testament of love and initiation to the Apostles and to mankind in general.

In addressing Caiaphas Jesus spoke to the whole world. The Sadducee, however, who had obtained what he wished, listens to nothing more. Tearing his vestment of fine linen, he exclaims : "He has blasphemed ; what further need have we of witnesses ? Ye have heard his blasphemy ; what think ye of it ?" A gloomy though ominous murmur

arose from the Sanhedrim : " He is guilty of death." Immediately vile insults and brutal outrage on the part of those of lower rank gave answer to the condemnation uttered by their superiors. The guards spit on him and strike him in the face, as they exclaim : " Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee ? " Beneath this outburst of low and savage hatred, the pale sublime countenance of the great sufferer resumes its visionary marble fixity. Some one has said that there are statues which weep ; there is indeed a tearless grief, victims' unuttered prayers, full of terror to their assailants whom they pursue for the remainder of their lives.

All was not yet over, however. The Sanhedrim may pronounce the death penalty, the secular power and the consent of the Roman authorities are needed to put it into execution. The interview with Pilate, related in detail by John, is no less remarkable than that with Caiaphas. This strange dialogue between the Christ and the Roman governor, to which the violence of the Jewish priests, and the cries of a fanatical populace, play the part of an ancient tragedy chorus, gives the conviction of a mighty dramatic truth, for it lays bare the souls of the different characters, and shows the clash of the three powers in play : Roman Cæsar-

ism, bigoted Judaism, and the universal religion of the Spirit represented by the Christ. Pilate, totally indifferent to the religious quarrel, but greatly troubled over the matter, for he is afraid the death of Jesus will occasion a rising of the people, questions him with a certain amount of precaution, and offers him a means of escape, in the hope that he will take advantage of it. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered: "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate asked: "Then thou art a king?" Jesus again replied: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Pilate no more understands this affirmation of the spiritual royalty of Jesus than Caiaphas understood his religious testament. "What is truth?" he remarks, with a shrug of the shoulders. The sceptical Roman knight's question reveals the state of mind in which the heathen world then was, as it does that of all society in a state of decadence. All the same, as he did not see in the accused Jesus anything other than a harmless dreamer, he added: "I find no fault in him," and proposes to the Jews that he should liberate him. The populace, however, instigated by the priests, cries aloud: "Release unto us Barabbas!" Then Pilate, who detests the Jews, gives himself the ironical pleasure

of causing their pretended king to be beaten with rods. He thinks this will satisfy the fanatics, but they only become the more furious, and madly exclaim : "Crucify him !"

In spite of this outburst of popular passion, Pilate still resists. He is tired of being cruel. Throughout his life he has seen so much bloodshed, punished with death so many rebels, and heard so many groans and curses without his equanimity being troubled in the slightest. But the mute, stoic suffering of the Galilean prophet beneath the purple cloak and crown of thorns has sent a hitherto unknown thrill through his very being. In a strange fugitive vision he utters the words, with no idea of their import : "Ecce Homo ! Behold the Man !" The stern hard-hearted Roman is almost overcome with emotion ; he is on the point of pronouncing a sentence of acquittal. The priests of the Sanhedrim, with eyes intently fixed on him, see this emotion, and are filled with terror in consequence ; they feel that their prey is escaping them. Craftily they deliberate among themselves. After a few moments they raise their right hands, and, turning aside their heads with horrified gesture, exclaim in one voice : "He has made himself the Son of God !"

When Pilate heard that saying, says John, his

fear increased. Fear of what? What meaning had this for the unbelieving Roman, who heartily despised both the Jews and their religion, and believed in none other than Cæsar, and the political religion of Rome? . . . There is a serious reason for this. Although different meanings were given to it, the expression "Son of God" was tolerably well known in ancient esoterism, and Pilate, although sceptical, was not altogether free from superstition. At Rome, in the Minor Mysteries of Mithras, in which Roman knights became initiated, he had heard that a Son of God was a kind of interpreter of divinity. To whatever nation or religion he belonged, an attempt on his life was a great crime. Pilate had little faith in these Persian reveries, but the name troubled him nevertheless, and increased his embarrassment. Seeing this, the Jews fling at the proconsul the final accusation: "If thou settest free this man, thou art no friend of Cæsar's; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. . . . We have no king but Cæsar." Irresistible argument; denying God is of little import, but conspiring against Cæsar is the crime of crimes. Pilate is obliged to give way and pronounce sentence of condemnation. Thus, at the end of his public career Jesus finds himself face to face with the master of the world, against whom

he—an occult opponent—has fought indirectly all his life. The shadow of Cæsar sends him to the cross! Profound is the logic of events; the Jews have delivered him up to judgment, but it is the Roman spectre which stretches out its hand to kill. The body indeed is destroyed, but it is he, the glorified Christ, whose martyrdom will for ever deprive Cæsar of the aureole he has usurped, the divine apotheosis, the infernal blasphemy of absolute power.

. . . . .

Pilate, after washing his hands of the blood of the innocent Jesus, now utters the terrible words: *Condemno, ibis in crucem*; and the impatient mob hurries away in the direction of Golgotha.

Following them, we find ourselves on the barren heights overlooking Jerusalem, and bearing the name of Gilgal, Golgotha, or place of skulls; a sinister desert covered with human bones, for centuries the scene of horrible punishments. Not a tree can be seen, the ground seems to bristle with gibbets. It is here that Alexander Janneus had come with his whole harem to witness the execution of hundreds of prisoners; here that Varus had crucified two thousand rebels; and now the gentle Messiah, whose coming had been foretold by the prophets, was on this same spot to

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undergo the terrible death penalty, invented by the atrocious genius of the Phœnicians, and adopted by the implacable law of Rome. The cohort of the legionaries has formed a mighty circle on the top of the hill ; they drive away with their lances the few followers who remained faithful to the condemned Christ. These are Galilean women, mute with despair, who fling themselves on the ground before the cross. The final hour has come; the defender of the poor, the feeble and the oppressed, must finish his task in that state of abject martyrdom reserved for slaves and robbers. The prophet, consecrated by the Essenes, must allow himself to be nailed to the cross he had accepted in the vision of Engaddi ; the Son of God must drink of the chalice which had appeared to him in the Transfiguration, and must descend into the depths of hell and of all earthly horror. . . . He has refused the traditional drink prepared by the pious women of Jerusalem, and which is intended to deaden the sufferings of the crucified victims. In fullest consciousness will he suffer the agony of death. Bound to the cruel gibbet, as the stern hard-hearted soldiers with mighty hammer-blows drive the nails into those feet, the object of such passionate reverence, and through those hands never raised except in blessing, a dull mist of

horrible pain closes his eyes and chokes his throat. Still, amid such convulsions of pain and infernal anguish, the Saviour pleads for his executioners : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now the cup is being drained to its dregs ; the death-agony lasts from noon to sunset. Moral is added to physical torture, which it surpasses in malignity. The initiate has abdicated his powers, the Son of God is about to suffer eclipse ; only the man of sorrows remains. For a few hours he will lose his heaven, to measure and fathom the depths of the abyss of human suffering. There stands the cross with its victim, and the superscription—the proconsul's final shaft of irony—"This is the King of the Jews !" As through a mist of anguish, the crucified one sees the holy city Jerusalem he wished to glorify now hurling anathemas against him. Where are his disciples ? They have disappeared in all directions. He hears nothing but the insults of the members of the Sanhedrim, who, imagining that the prophet is no longer to be feared, exult with joy at his death-struggles. "He saved others," they say ; "himself he cannot save !" Through such perverse blasphemies Jesus sees, in terrifying prophetic vision, all the crimes that unjust potentates and



fanatical priests are to commit in his name. With his own sign will they pronounce maledictions, and with his own cross will they crucify. It is not the gloomy silence of the heavens veiled against him, but rather the light, lost to humanity, which tears from him the despairing wail: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, in one final burst, there springs forth from his soul the cry "It is finished!"

Sublime Nazarene, divine Son of Man, even now is the victory thine. Doubtless thy soul has once again found, in light more dazzling than before, the heaven of Engaddi and Mount Tabor! Down through the ages hast thou seen thy word fleeting victorious, and no other glory hast thou desired than the uplifted hands and eyes of those thou hast healed and comforted. . . . Even now a shudder of dread comes over thy torturers, as they listen to thy final words so full of meaning but which they do not understand. The Roman soldiers have turned to gaze at the strange radiance thy spirit has left on the tranquil countenance of this corpse, whilst thy slayers look at one another in wonder and say: "Could this have been a God?"

. . . . .

Is the drama really finished? The silent though

formidable strife now at an end, the struggle between divine Love and Death which has united with the reigning powers of earth to overwhelm him, at last closed? Where is the victor? Does triumph remain with those self-satisfied priests as they descend from Calvary well pleased with their deed, for they have seen the prophet breathe his last, or with this pale crucified Christ, already livid in death? For these faithful, weeping women, whom the Roman legionaries have permitted to approach the foot of the cross, as well as for the terror-stricken disciples who have taken refuge in the grotto of Jehoshaphat, all is indeed at an end. The Messiah, who was to be enthroned at Jerusalem, has died an infamous death on the cross. The master has disappeared, and with him hope, the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven itself. A gloomy silence of deep despair hangs over the small community. Even Peter and John are overwhelmed with grief. Darkness is all around; not a single ray illumines their souls. And yet, just as, in the Eleusinian mysteries, profound darkness is followed by a dazzling light, so, in the Gospels, this deep despair is succeeded by a sudden miraculous joy which bursts forth like a beam of light at sunrise, and the joyful cry resounds throughout Judæa: "He is risen again!"

Mary Magdalene, wandering near the tomb in

the excess of her grief, was the first to see the master, and to recognise him by his voice as he uttered her name, Mary! Overcome with joy, she threw herself at his feet. Again she saw Jesus look at her, and wave his hand as though to prevent her touching him; then the apparition suddenly vanished, leaving around the Magdalene an atmosphere of warmth and the delight of a real presence. Afterwards the holy women met the Lord, who said to them: "Go and tell my brethren to proceed to Galilee, there they shall see me." That same evening, as the eleven were met in private, they saw Jesus enter the room. He took a seat in their midst, and gently reproached them for their unbelief. Then he said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They listened to him as in a dream, for they seemed to have completely forgotten his death, and were persuaded that the master would not again leave them. However, just as they were about to speak, they saw him disappear from their midst like a vanishing light. The echo of his voice still vibrated in their ears. The apostles, amazed, sought the spot where he had been; there still lingered a vague light, which quickly disappeared. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus appeared once more on a mountain to five hundred of the brethren assembled by the apostles. He also showed himself again to the

eleven, after which the apparitions ceased. Faith, however, had been created, the first impulse given, and Christianity was a living force. The apostles, filled with the sacred fire, went about healing the sick and preaching their Master's gospel. Three years afterwards, a young Pharisee, named Saul, animated by violent hatred against the new religion, whose defenders he persecuted with all the vigour of youth, journeyed to Damascus, accompanied by several companions. On the way he saw himself suddenly enveloped in so dazzling a flame of fire, that he fell to the earth. Trembling, he exclaimed : "Who art thou ?" A voice replied : "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul's terrified companions raised him to his feet. They had heard the voice though they had seen nothing. The young man, blinded by the flash, recovered his sight only three days afterwards.

Converted to the faith of the Christ, he became Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. On this one point is the whole world agreed, that but for Saul's conversion Christianity, confined as it was to Judæa, would never have conquered the Western world.

Such are the facts as related in the New Testament. Whatever efforts be made to reduce their results to a minimum, and whatever be the religious or philosophical idea attached to them, they cannot be regarded as legends, pure and simple, and re-

fused the value of authentic testimony on all points essential. For eighteen centuries the waves of doubt and denial have assailed the rock of this testimony; for a hundred years the weapons of criticism have been directed against it. Breaches have been effected in places, but its position remains steadfast. What is there behind the visions of the apostles? Elementary theologians, interpreters of the letter, and agnostic savants may dispute for ever; they will never convert one another, and their reasonings will be in vain, so long as Theosophy, the science of the Spirit, has not enlarged their conceptions, and a superior experimental psychology, the art of laying bare the soul, left their eyes unopened. But from the standpoint of the conscientious historian, *i.e.* the authenticity of these facts as psychical actualities, there is one point on which doubt is impossible: that the apostles had these apparitions, and that it was impossible to shake their faith in the resurrection of the Christ. If John's account be rejected on the ground of having received its definite compilation about a hundred years after the death of Jesus, and also Luke's account of the Christ's appearance to the disciples at Emmaus as a mere poetical amplification, there still remain the simple and positive affirmations of Matthew and Mark, which lie at the very root of the Christian tradition and religion. And even more

solid and indisputable is the testimony of Paul. Wishing to explain to the Corinthians the reason of his faith and the basis of the gospel he preaches, he enumerates in order six successive appearances of Jesus : those to Peter, to the eleven, to the five hundred, "most of whom," he says, "are still living"; to James, to the assembled apostles, and finally, his own vision on the way to Damascus. These facts were communicated to Paul by Peter himself, and by James, three years after the death of Jesus, just after Paul's conversion, at the time of his first journey to Jerusalem. Accordingly he received them from eye-witnesses. Finally, the most indisputable of all these visions is by no means the least extraordinary; I refer to that of Paul himself. He continually alludes to it in his Epistles as being the source of his faith. Given the former psychological condition of Paul and the nature of his vision, we see it is from without, not from within. Of an unexpected and terrifying character, it completely changes his whole being. Like a baptism of fire, it descends upon him, clothes him in a new and impenetrable armour, and establishes him in the sight of the whole world as the invincible champion of the Christ.

Paul's testimony accordingly possesses a double authority, in so far as it confirms his own vision and corroborates those of the others. Whoever

might feel inclined to doubt the sincerity of such affirmations would be obliged to reject *en masse* all historical testimony, and to renounce the writing of history. Note, too, that if critical history is incompatible with an exact weighing and well-thought-out selection of all the documents, philosophical history would also be impossible, if greatness of effects could not be referred back to greatness of causes. It would be possible with Celsus, Strauss, and M. Renan to refuse all objective value to the resurrection, and consider it as a phenomenon resulting from pure hallucination. If so, one is obliged to found the greatest religious revolution of humanity on an aberration of the senses and a mere delusion of the mind.<sup>1</sup> There can be no denying that faith in the resurrection is the basis of historical Christianity. But for this confirmation of Jesus' teaching by a dazzling fact, his religion would not even have had a beginning.

This event effected a complete revolution in the souls of the apostles. In consequence of it their whole mental attitude, from being Judaic, became Christian. The Christ is living in glory, he has spoken to them. The heavens have opened; the life beyond has entered into the life within, the dawn of immortality has touched them and kindled

<sup>1</sup> Strauss says: "The fact of the resurrection is explicable only as 'ein welthistorischer humbug.'" The expression is rather cynical than witty, and does not explain the visions of the apostles and of Paul.

their souls with a fire which nothing can extinguish. Above Israel's tottering earthly kingdom, they have caught a glimpse of the world-wide heavenly kingdom in all its glory. Hence their eagerness for the strife, their joy in martyrdom. Jesus' resurrection gives birth to this mighty impulse and hope which carries the gospel to all nations and the good tidings to the utmost limits of earth. For the success of Christianity two things were necessary, as Fabre d'Olivet has said: that Jesus should be willing to die, and that he should have the power to rise again.

To form a rational idea of the fact of the resurrection, and understand its religious and philosophical bearing, one must consider only the phenomenon of the successive appearances, and, from the very outset, remove from one's mind the absurd idea of the resurrection of the body, one of the greatest stumbling-blocks of Christian dogma, which, in this particular as in many others, has remained at quite a childish and rudimentary stage. The disappearance of Jesus' body can be explained by natural causes, and it is worthy of note that the bodies of several great adepts have disappeared quite as mysteriously and without leaving the slightest trace. It has never been discovered what became of the bodies of Moses, Pythagoras, and Apollonius of Tyana. Possibly the brothers, known or unknown, who kept watch



over them, destroyed by fire their master's body, to prevent pollution at the hands of enemies. In any case, it is only when regarded from the esoteric point of view that the scientific aspect and spiritual grandeur of the resurrection really appear.

By Egyptians as by Persians, of the religion of Zoroaster, both before and after Jesus, by Israelites and by Christians of the first and second centuries, the resurrection has been interpreted in two ways, the one material and absurd, the other spiritual and theosophical. The first is the popular idea, finally adopted by the Church after the repression of gnosticism; the second is the profound idea of the initiates. According to the first view, the resurrection signifies the return to life of the material body; in a word, the reconstitution of the decomposed or dispersed corpse, so it was imagined, was destined to take place at the coming of the Messiah, or at the Last Judgment. It is useless to insist on the gross materialism and absurdity of this conception. To the initiate the resurrection has a far different meaning. It refers to the doctrine of the ternary constitution of man. It signifies the purification and regeneration of the sidereal, ethereal, and fluidic body, which is the very organism of the soul. This purification may take place commencing from the present life, through the inner work of the soul, and a certain

method of existence ; although, for the generality of mankind, it finds accomplishment only after death, and then for those only who, in one way or another, have aspired towards justice and truth. In the other world hypocrisy is impossible. There souls appear as they are in reality, they fatally manifest themselves under the form and colour of their essence ; dark and hideous if they are evil ; radiant and beautiful if they are good. Such is the doctrine given by Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where he formally says : "There is an animal body and there is a spiritual body."<sup>1</sup> Jesus states this symbolically but with greater profundity for those who can read between the lines in the secret conversation with Nicodemus. Now, the more a soul is spiritualised, the farther will it be from the earthly atmosphere ; the farther away the cosmic region which attracts it by the law of affinity, the more difficult its manifestation to men.

Accordingly, superior souls seldom manifest themselves to man, except in a state of ecstasy or profound slumber. Then, the physical eyes being closed, the soul, half detached from the body, itself sees souls at times. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that a mighty prophet, a veritable son of God, manifests himself to his own in the waking state of consciousness, the better to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 39-46.

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persuade them by a striking appeal to sense and imagination. In such instances the disincarnated soul succeeds in momentarily giving its spiritual body a visible, sometimes even a tangible appearance, by means of the special dynamism exercised by spirit over matter, through the intermediary of the electrical forces of the atmosphere and the magnetic forces of living bodies.

Apparently this is what happened in the case of Jesus. The appearances related in the New Testament may be placed in one or the other, alternately, of these two categories—spiritual vision and sense apparition. What is certain is that they possessed for the apostles the character of supreme reality. They would rather have doubted the existence of heaven and earth than their living communion with the resurrected Christ; for these soul-stirring appearances formed the brightest events in their lives, the profoundest truth of which they were conscious. There is nothing supernatural in them though there is an unknown element in Nature, its occult continuation into the Infinite, the flashes of the invisible on the confines of the visible. In our present corporeal state we can scarcely believe or even conceive of the reality of the impalpable; in the spiritual state, it is matter which will appear to us the unreal and non-existent. In the Spirit is found the synthesis of soul and matter, two phases

of the one substance. Reverting to eternal principles and final causes, it is the innate laws of intelligence which explain the dynamism of nature, as it is the study of the soul, by experimental psychology which explains the laws of life.

Consequently the resurrection, esoterically understood as I have just pointed out, was at once the necessary conclusion of the life of Jesus and the indispensable preface to the historical evolution of Christianity,—necessary conclusion, for Jesus had on several occasions announced it to his disciples. The power of appearing to them in triumphant glory after his death was due to the purity and innate force of his soul, increased a hundred-fold by the grandeur of the effort and of the accomplished work.

Regarded from without, and from an earthly point of view, the Messianic drama ends on the cross. Though sublime in itself, there is yet lacking the fulfilment of the promise. Regarded from within, from the inmost consciousness of the Christ, and from the heavenly point of view, the drama contains three acts, whose summits are marked by the Temptation, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection. These three phases represent in other terms, the Initiation of the Christ, the total Revelation, and the Crowning of the work. They correspond to what the apostles and the Christian

initiates of the first centuries called the Mysteries of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A necessary crowning, as I have said, of the life of the Christ, and an indispensable preface to the historical evolution of Christianity. The ship, built on the beach, needed to be launched on the ocean. The resurrection was, in addition, as a flood of light thrown on the whole esoteric life of Jesus. We have no occasion for astonishment at finding that the early Christians were, so to speak, dazzled and blinded by the wonderful event, that they often gave a literal interpretation to the Master's teaching, and mistook the meaning of his words. But in these days, now that the human spirit has traversed ages, religions, and sciences, we can divine what a Saint Paul, a Saint John, what Jesus himself understood by the mysteries of the Father and of the Spirit. We see that they contained the very highest and truest elements of the psychical science and theosophic intuition of the East. We also see the power of renewed expansion given by the Christ to the ancient eternal truth by the grandeur of his love and the energy of his will. Finally, we see the metaphysical and practical side of Christianity, the cause of its power and vitality.

The old theosophists of Asia were acquainted with transcendent truths. The Brahmans even found the key to the past and future life by

formulating the organic law of reincarnation and the alternation of lives. In entering the life beyond, however, and contemplating Eternity, they forgot terrestrial realisation, individual and social life. Greece, at first initiated into the same truths under more veiled and anthropomorphic forms, became attached by its very genius to the natural terrestrial life. This enabled it to reveal the immortal laws of Beauty, and to formulate the principles of the sciences of observation. From this point of view, its conception of the life beyond gradually diminished and darkened. Jesus, in his breadth and universality, embraces both sides of life. In the Lord's Prayer, which sums up his teaching, he says: "Thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven." Now the kingdom of the divine on earth signifies the fulfilment of the moral and social law in all its richness, in all the glory of the Beautiful, the Good, and the True. Thus the magic of his doctrine, his—in a sense—unlimited power of development, dwell in the unity of his moral and metaphysical aspects, his ardent faith in the life eternal, and the necessity he felt of beginning it in the world by a life of action and love. The Christ says to the soul, cast down by earthly trouble: "Rise; heaven is thy fatherland; still, in order to believe this and to attain thereto, prove it here below by deeds of love."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PROMISE AND ITS FULFILMENT—THE TEMPLE

"IN three days I will destroy the temple, and in three days I will build it up again." This was said to his disciples by the Son of Mary, the Essene consecrated as Son of Man, *i.e.* the spiritual inheritor of the Word of Moses, of Hermes, and of all the former sons of God. Has this bold promise, the word of the initiator and initiate, been realised? Yes, if consideration be taken of the consequences which the teaching of the Christ, confirmed by his death and spiritual resurrection, have had for humanity, and all the consequences his promise holds over a limitless future. His word and sacrifice have laid the foundations of an invisible temple, but it is only continued and brought to completion in proportion as each individual, throughout all time, contributes to the work.

What is this temple? It is of a nature at once moral, social, and physical, the temple of regenerate humanity.

The moral temple is the regeneration of the human soul, the transformation of individuals by the human ideal offered as an example to humanity in the person of Jesus. The wonderful harmony and plenitude of his virtues make it difficult to define ; balanced reason, mystic intuition, human sympathy, power of word and action ; infinite compassion, love even unto sacrifice, courage unto death ; no experience was unknown to him. There was sufficient soul in every drop of his blood to make a hero, and yet, what divine gentleness was his ! The profound union of heroism and love, of will and intelligence, of the Eternal-Masculine with the Eternal-Feminine make of him the flower of the human ideal. His whole moral teaching, whose loftiest expression is unending brotherly love and a universal human alliance, flows naturally from such a mighty personality. The work of the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since his death has resulted in the inculcating of this ideal in the consciousness of all mankind. For there is scarcely a man throughout the civilised world who does not possess a more or less clear notion thereof. Accordingly, it may be affirmed that the moral temple desired by the Christ is, if not finished, at any rate based on an indestructible foundation at the present day.



It is not so with the social temple. This supposes the establishment of the kingdom of God or of the providential law in the organic institutions of humanity; it remains to be constructed from the foundation. For men still live in a state of warfare under the law of Force and Destiny. The law of the Christ, which remains in the moral conscience, has not yet passed into human institutions. I have only incidentally touched upon questions of social and political organisation in this book, which is solely intended to throw light on the philosophical and religious question at its base, through some of the essential esoteric truths. In these few concluding words I will not discuss the question any further. It is too vast and complex, and beyond my power to attempt even to define it within the compass of a few words. I will merely say that social warfare exists, as a principle, in all European countries. There are no economic, religious, or social principles admitted by all classes of society. The nations of Europe, also, have not ceased existing in a state of open war or armed peace with one another. They are united by no common federative principle. Their interests and common aspirations appeal to no recognised authority, they have no sanction before any supreme tribunal. If the law of the Christ has penetrated into individual

consciousness and, up to a certain point, into social life, it is still the pagan and barbarian law which governs our political institutions. At the present time, political power is everywhere constituted on insufficient foundations. On the one hand it emanates from the so-called divine right of kings, which is none other than military force; on the other from universal suffrage, which is merely the instinct of the masses, or mere average intelligence. A nation is not a number of uniform values or ciphers; it is a living being composed of organs. So long as national representation is not the image of this organisation, right from its working to its teaching classes, there will be no organic or intelligent national representation. So long as the delegates of all scientific bodies, and the whole of the Christian churches do not sit together in one upper council, our societies will be governed by instinct, by passion, and by might, and there will be no social temple.

Then how comes it that, rising above the Church which is too small to contain him in his entirety, above politics which deny him, and above Science which only half understands him, the Christ is fuller of life than ever? It is because his sublime morality is the corollary of a science even more sublime. Behind him we perceive, contemporary

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with and beyond the time of Moses, the whole ancient theosophy of Indian, Egyptian, and Grecian initiates, of whom he forms a striking confirmation. We are beginning to understand that Jesus, at the very height of his consciousness, the transfigured Christ, is opening his loving arms to his brothers, the other Messiahs who preceded him, beams of the Living Word as he was, that he is opening them wide to Science in its entirety, Art in its divinity, and Life in its completeness. But his promise cannot be fulfilled without the help of all the living forces of humanity. Two main things are necessary nowadays for the continuation of the mighty work: on the one hand, the progressive unfolding of experimental science and intuitive philosophy to facts of psychic order, intellectual principles, and spiritual proofs; on the other, the expansion of Christian dogma in the direction of tradition and esoteric science, and subsequently a reorganisation of the Church according to a graduated initiation; this by a free and irresistible movement of all Christian churches, which are also equally daughters of the Christ. Science must become religious and religion scientific. This double evolution, already in preparation, would finally and forcibly bring about a reconciliation of Science and Religion on esoteric

grounds. The work will not progress without considerable difficulty at first, but the future of European Society depends on it. The transformation of Christianity, in its esoteric sense would bring with it that of Judaism and Islam, as well as a regeneration of Brahminism and Buddhism in the same fashion, it would accordingly furnish a religious basis for the reconciliation of Asia and Europe.

This is the spiritual temple to be constructed, the crowning of the word intuitively conceived and desired by Jesus. Can his message of Love form the magnetic chain of Science and Art, of religions and peoples, and thus become the universal word?

At the present time the Christ is master of the globe, through the two youngest and most vigorous races, still full of faith. By way of Russia he has a foothold in Asia, and through the Anglo-Saxon race he rules the New World. Europe is older than America, but younger than Asia. They slander Europe who believe her destined to an irremediable decadence. Still, if she continues her internal struggles, instead of federating beneath the rule of one capable authority, at once scientific and religious; if, through the extinction of this faith which is only the love-fed light of the spirit,

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she is continuing the preparation for her moral and social decomposition, her civilisation runs the risk of perishing, first by social upheavals, and afterwards by the invasion of younger races, which will seize the torch dropped from her hands.

Surely she has a more glorious part to play, the preservation of the guiding of the world, by finishing the social work of the Christ, formulating his complete and perfected thought, and crowning by the help of Science, Art, and Justice, the spiritual temple of the greatest of the Sons of God.

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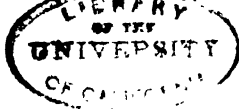
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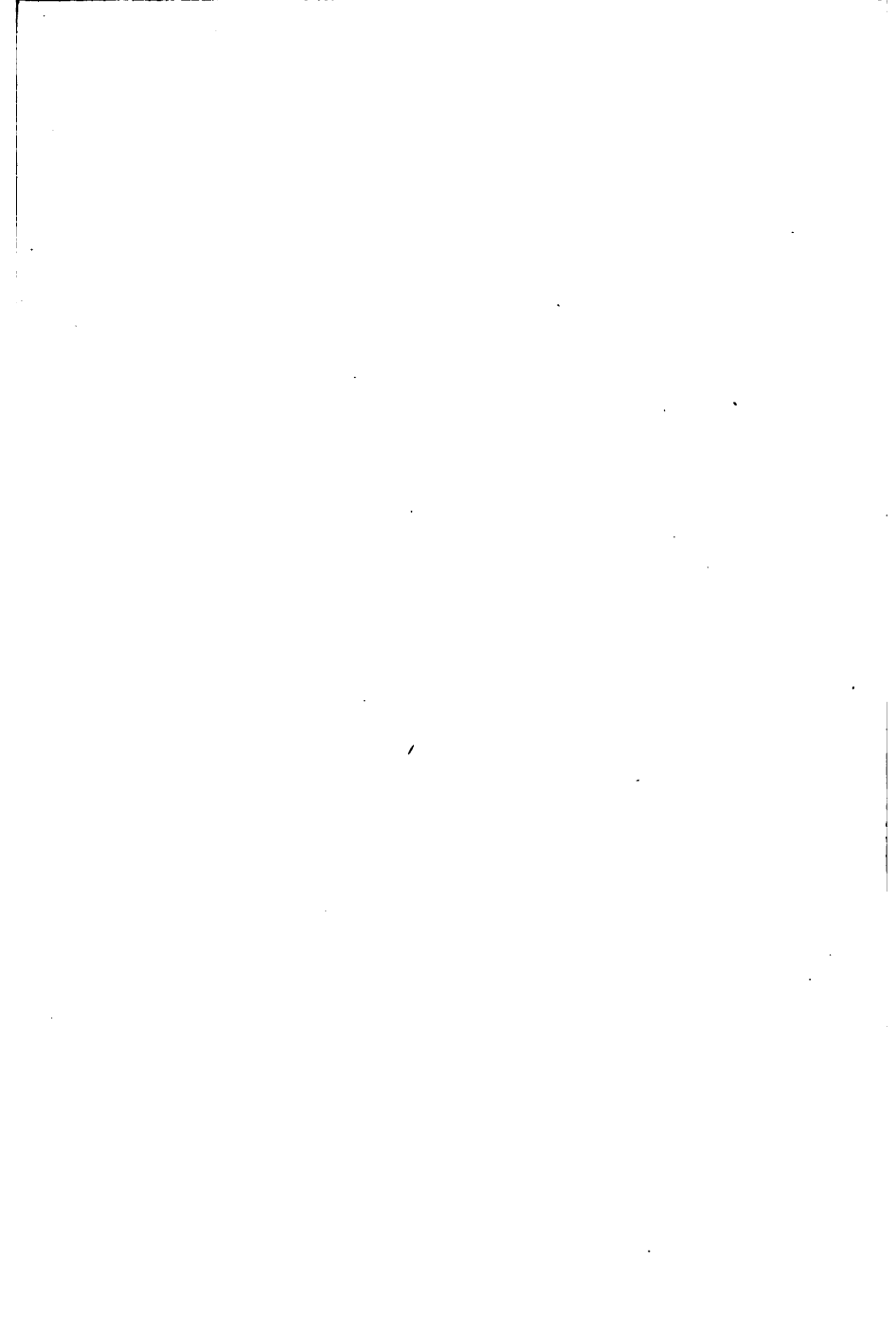
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